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ONE OF THE RED SHIRTS



HERBERT HAYENS

KE 3156



One of the Red Shirts



Garibaldi and the King.—Page 304

Frontispiece

ONE OF THE RED SHIRTS

A Story of Garibaldi's Men

BY
HERBERT HAYENS

Author of "A Captain of Irregulars," "A Fighter in Green," etc.



PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO.
PUBLISHERS

KE 3156



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"I ran like a hunted animal."—Page 5

mounted several stairs, his men followed; my heart beat like the piston-rod of an engine.

To stand still or return meant certain capture; to advance—? Well, there was no help for it. Despair gave me courage for the mad attempt, and, yelling loudly, I rushed down the steps, emptying my revolver at random.

The effect was laughable. Panic-stricken for the moment, the soldiers dropped their lanterns and bumped against each other. Hit by a bullet, one toppled over, dragging another with him, and causing the utmost confusion.

Crash! crash! I was amongst them, hitting out right and left, while they, screaming and yelling, struck wildly at each other in the darkness. A swinging blow from the butt-end of a musket narrowly missed my head, hitting some one, however, who dropped heavily.

Into the courtyard I ran like a hunted animal, but unfortunately the light from a lamp betrayed me, and the pack followed in full cry. Half-a-dozen shots were fired, and as I turned into the street the officer trod closely on my heels.

The shouts and firing had attracted a crowd of sleepers in the open air, and one of them managed to stumble in front of the officer, sending him spinning into the roadway.

Catching my arm another cried, "This way, excellenza!" and hurried me off at full speed, while the crowd did their best to impede the soldiers, though apparently trying hard to capture me. They knew not the nature of my offence; it was enough for them that I was "against the government."

Meanwhile my guide was forcing me at a tremendous pace down the Via Lavinaio, past the queer old church, and into a labyrinth of dirty streets where the only light came from the little lamps hanging beneath the picture of the Madonna at every street corner.

The streets grew still narrower and dirtier, and the tumble-down houses leaned against each other in the effort to stand up at all; but, panting and well-nigh breathless, on we sped till the shouts of the pursuers became less distinct, died away, and finally ceased. Then the stranger permitted me to stop and catch my breath.

"You are safe now, *excellenza*," said he. "All the soldiers in Naples could not drag you from here."

"Faith, my friend," I replied, laughing, "you may well say that! This is a veritable rat's hole!"

"*Excellenza* is right," answered the fellow in a tone of pathetic sadness. "We are rats, and these are our sewers."

We now approached a vaulted passage so narrow that I had to drop behind. A picture of the Madonna with the customary lamp beneath hung over the entrance, and the light showed a huge hulking fellow leaning against the wall.

The two men exchanged words in what was to me an unknown tongue, and I felt very much relieved when we reached the farther end of the passage. Perhaps my guide guessed what I thought.

"Have no fear, *excellenza*," said he quietly. "No one here would hurt a hair of your head. Those who come under the protection of Francesco Poli are safe from harm."

This sounded all right, but, for the life of me, I could not understand what the fellow meant. However, we trudged on, and though at several points other figures sprang into life at our approach, no one molested us.

Finally, at the end of a narrow alley my guide stopped, pushed open a narrow door, and stepped into a courtyard, three sides of which were occupied by hovels that, seen by daylight, would make an Irish pig blush. The one we entered contained but two rooms, the first of which was empty.

It would not have taken long to write an inventory of Francesco's effects, the only articles of furniture being a lantern, a picture of the Madonna, a mattress, and a crippled three-legged stool propped against the wall to prevent it from falling.

With the graceful courtesy apparently inherent in most sons of the South, Francesco begged me to take the chair of honour; he himself remained standing.

"You're a good fellow," I remarked, "and have saved my life. I am very thankful to you, and if my purse——"

Francesco looked at me with the air of a monarch, and I stopped awkwardly.

"No one in this quarter of the city would take payment from the son of the Signor Inglese," said he proudly.

Many people in Naples thought Mr. Carter my father, and Francesco evidently was one of them.

"The Signor is in trouble," said I. "The soldiers came an hour or two ago to make him prisoner."

Francesco scowled.

"And you ran away?" cried he. "Left your own father to be dragged to prison?"

"No, no; you are mistaken. Listen to me," and, without going too much into details, I told him why I had escaped.

"Stay here," said he when I had finished. "I will go to the hotel of the Signor and discover what has happened."

Drawing his cloak around him he left the room, closing but not locking the door.

After waiting an hour or two in this miserable, ill-lit den, I went to lie down on the mattress, but a closer inspection showed it would be better to remain standing. The time passed very slowly, and I imagined all sorts of queer things. At one moment I pictured my guardian and Giovanni thrown into a gloomy cell; then, looking at the bright side of things, I hoped my flight with the compromising papers had saved them. At length the smoky little lamp went out, and I sat on the stool in the darkness.

Francesco returned about six o'clock, though, until the door opened, I did not know it was morning, the room having no window. I ran toward him eagerly, but stopped at sight of his gloomy face.

"The signors are in the Francesco prison," said he abruptly, "and soldiers are watching for you at every outlet from the city. I do not ask what you are doing, but if you get into the hands of the government—" he made a motion as if firing a musket.

"Yes, yes. They will shoot us all three; but they haven't caught me yet!"

"They will the first time you show yourself."

This was not pleasant hearing, especially as I had it

in my mind to try to rescue the prisoners. On this subject, however, Francesco would listen to nothing.

"You are mad," said he. "Put that idea out of your head, and think rather how best to slip away from Naples."

This luckless incident had, of course, upset all my plans. I knew not what to do, and I could hardly ask advice from my new-found friend.

He was a fierce-looking fellow—the sort of man you would not care to pass on a dark night; yet he had his virtues, like the rest of us, one being an uncommon sense of gratitude. He told me during the day that my guardian had nursed his little girl through a terrible fever, and, though the child died, the father never forgot the action of the kind-hearted Englishman.

While we talked an old woman brought in a meagre breakfast, and the three-legged stool was converted into a table.

"Are you afraid of the sea?" asked my friend when we had finished our meal.

"Not at all. Why?"

"I have been thinking, if we could get a smuggler's boat, the soldiers might yet be cheated."

"That would cost money?"

"Yes," he answered reluctantly.

"Here is my purse. Spend what is necessary."

Taking out a few gold coins he returned the purse, saying, "These are enough. If Peppo be in the bay I shall not need even these."

I followed him to the door, and, when he had gone, remained watching the scene in the enclosed court.

The hovels would not have made even decent pigsties. They were all of one storey, windowless, and in the most ruinous condition. All the furniture in the court would not have fetched a half-crown at an auction; but, on the other hand, there was enough dirt to supply soil for a small farm.

The people apparently lived in the court, where they were gathered round a big fire. Nearly naked children, frowsy women, and unkempt, truculent-looking men—all seemed half-starved, and in need of vigorous scrubbing. The sight was so painful that I returned to my stool and waited in solitude.

About the middle of the afternoon the old woman came to trim the lamp, and from her gossip I learned several interesting particulars concerning Francesco. He was, as I more than half suspected, a Camorrist—a member of the Camorra, one of the most powerful of the Italian secret societies, and to this his influence over his wild comrades of the slums was due. Without his protection my life in that quarter of Naples would not have been safe for five minutes. Every man in those narrow alleys carried a sharp poniard, and none was scrupulous in its use. My purse of gold, my watch, nay, my very clothes would have been sufficient temptation to these hungry wretches, who rarely knew the luxury of a full stomach. Yet, because Francesco was my patron, no finger was raised against me; indeed, the ancient dame was the only person who came near the room.

Francesco returned about five o'clock, bringing better news than I had expected.

Although two further arrests had been made, it was rumoured in the town that the prisoners would

not be tried till the government had gathered up all the threads of the conspiracy; and at present these were in my hands. Moreover, Peppo, the smuggler and patriot, was in the bay and eager to help in my escape.

Francesco had arranged a plan, and, unfolding a bundle, showed me a complete suit of clothes which he thought would be useful for a disguise. In England the first policeman would have taken their wearer into custody on suspicion; but then, one should not judge by appearances.

The clothes were not new, and smelled none too sweetly, but a long cloak covered the more prominent rents, and the slouched hat was admirably suited to conceal my face. I made the exchange with extreme regret, while the Camorrist prepared some stuff to darken my eyebrows and complexion.

"You will pass," said he at length; "but not at close quarters."

Rolling up my own clothes, I placed them on the dirty mattress, slipped a piece of gold into the hand of the old crone who had come to see us off, and followed Francesco into the courtyard.

"Will this Peppo take me to the island itself?" I asked.

"Certainly. Peppo will sail his boat across the Atlantic to serve Garibaldi; but no more talk, you have not the speech, and people will be suspicious."

In one of the narrow streets he pushed open the door of a modest wine-shop and signed to me to enter.

The first room was filled with evil-looking men who greeted Francesco with respect, and eyed me

mistrustfully; but we went straight through into another apartment, where the table was laid with a substantial meal. This was a welcome sight, and though the place might have been cleaner I set to work with a will, washing down the repast with a cup of thin red wine.

Before starting again I had an earnest talk with my friend, who willingly promised that, if the slightest chance offered, he would try to get my guardian and Giovanni out of prison. This relieved my mind somewhat, because I knew that if it were possible the Camorrist was the man to do it.

Having paid the reckoning we passed through the crowded room as before, and so into the street, where we were stopped by a man. He and Francesco entered into an earnest conversation; but, though I heard every word, not one did I understand. However, what he had said seemed satisfactory, as, when he disappeared, my friend said, "All goes well. Peppo is on board, and the boat is ready."

"How are we to get to her?"

"A light skiff waits for us, or rather for you; as I must stay in Naples to be near your father."

Darkness was already closing in, but there were many people, both civilians and soldiers, in the streets, and more than once I heard snatches of conversation concerning a conspiracy which the government had nipped in the bud.

It would have puzzled a clever spy to track our movements that evening. My guide was a past-master in the art of getting from one place to another without attracting notice. He did not walk, but glided, drawing me with him.

On the steps of a church that were crowded with beggars wrapped in greasy cloaks, we stopped a moment, and certainly I should have felt no surprise had a passer-by dropped a *soldo* into my palm.

Meanwhile Francesco was talking by means of signs to a man who lounged carelessly against the church door.

My friend's face became grave, and, taking my arm, he whispered, "Keep your eyes wide open; there's danger ahead."

We then continued the journey, dodging in and out of the crowd, turning down dark alleys, taking short cuts, hiding ourselves now and then behind pillars, though why I could not tell. In this way we approached the shore, my guide becoming even more cautious.

At length he stopped and looked about as if searching for some one.

"Strange!" he muttered, "but we must chance it; there's the sign. Do you see that light across the bay? That is the lantern in Peppo's boat, and it tells us he is waiting. Now they have run up one beneath it; a token of danger. There must be something in the wind. Guiseppe is absent from his post, and I never knew him fail before. Come, we must risk it."

At a rapid pace, but with an easy gliding motion, he led the way to the water's edge. His eyes must have been sharp as a cat's; he saw in the darkness without difficulty.

"The skiff is here," said he. "A pleasant voyage, excellenza. I will look after your father; on your return you will find him safe."

"Good-bye, Francesco. Many thanks. I hope we shall meet again."

"The skiff! the skiff! Here are the soldiers!"

Then, in an altered tone, "Oh, oh, Guiseppe! This is a bad day's work for you!"

The veneer had come off my amiable bandit, and I saw the natural man.

"Surrender!"

There was a hurried rush, and the next moment we were surrounded by Bourbons save on the side of the water.

Francesco laughed mockingly, crying aloud some words strange to me, but apparently familiar to his opponents. Then he laid about him vigorously with his club, all the while urging me to make for the skiff. This I tried to do, but one fellow springing before me called upon me to yield; probably he was an officer, as I saw the gleam of his sword; but my cudgel got home first, and he fell at the very edge of the water. This happened luckily for us, as his men, fearing he would be drowned, went to his assistance, while I scrambled into the skiff, which Francesco pushed off.

"Addio, signor!" cried he. Then came the sound of shots, and I could just see the Camorrist plunge into the waves.

Once again I heard his voice.

"Pull, signor, pull, or they will have you! Never mind me, I can dodge them!"

After this I heard no more of him.

Meanwhile the soldiers were firing at my skiff, but their shots, being badly aimed, did no harm.

Seizing the oars I began rowing steadily in the

direction of the smuggler's boat, when a long craft, manned by six rowers, shot out into the bay, and the Bourbon soldiers ceased firing in order to cheer. My cloak had gone during the struggle on shore, leaving my arms free; and I pulled with all my might into the darkening bay. Fortunately the sea was calm, or my skiff would have capsized; even so I feared every moment it would go to the bottom. On and on we raced till the perspiration poured from my forehead in a stream, and every muscle in my body ached. Still I had one satisfaction; the papers were safe from capture. Just one swing of the hand and the leathern wallet containing them would be lost in the blue waters of the bay. That, however, was the last resort; meanwhile I tugged desperately at the oars.

My pursuers came nearer and nearer. A command to surrender, which fell upon deaf ears, came floating over the water; then a man in the bow raised a musket to his shoulder and fired. The bullet whistled past me, and I was delighted at having gained two seconds. A second bullet proving equally unsuccessful, the chase was renewed.

Peppo's two lights danced up and down as if urging me forward; and very slowly the distance seemed to lessen. The sounds of the firing had evidently reached him, as now he headed his boat toward me. The sight of the white sail swelling in the breeze put new life into me, and I tugged and strained at the oars till I thought my muscles must snap.

Again the bullets sped from the pursuing boat, and then, crack! the half of one oar dropped into the sea!

A loud shout of triumph broke from my enemies,

and the bow of their boat rapidly neared me. A second shout, loud and fierce, rose from behind; Peppo's boat was upon us. I remember firing my revolver at the Bourbon in the bow, and hearing a yell of pain; then something struck my head with terrific force, and I knew no more.

CHAPTER II

THE HERO OF TWO WORLDS

TRAMP, tramp, overhead; a hurried rush of feet; a yelling of voices; a pitching and rolling as if I were being thrown from the top of a mountain and shot up again from below, brought me back to consciousness.

Opening my eyes I found I could see nothing clearly, and, groping about with my hands, I discovered myself to be in a sort of cubicle. My eyes ached, my head was heavy and swathed in rough bandages; I had not sufficient strength even to wonder at my situation.

Meanwhile the noise overhead continued vigorously; the pitching motion increased, and gradually it dawned upon me that I was in a sailor's bunk.

What had happened? Was I a prisoner, or had the smugglers saved me? What had become of my precious papers? Were they lost? At the bare notion I went cold with fright, and began to feel round the narrow bed.

My clothes were gone, and I was wrapped in coarse blankets, while the leathern wallet had disappeared. I tried unsuccessfully to get out of the bunk; then I shouted with all my might, but no one answered.

My mind was in a ferment; I felt distracted. Had Peppo really rescued me from the soldiers? If so,

would the discovery of the papers be too strong a temptation for him? With such a secret he could almost make his own terms with the government, and he was a poor man, risking his life daily for a miserable pittance. He knew nothing of me, nor I of him, save that he was a smuggler and hand in glove with a daring Camorrist. Even in the midst of these fears and doubts I could hardly help being amused at the thought of the queer company into which I had fallen.

For a sober young English lad I had started my adventure pretty well.

Once again I raised my voice, but the sound was lost amid the cracking of timber and the noise of roaring waters.

Several hours passed in this miserable state of suspense, and then, the fierce gale having expended its force, a man came down into my cabin. By the light of a lantern which he carried, I saw he was a short, thick-set fellow with a bronzed face, short grayish hair, and quite a jovial expression.

He wore heavy sea-boots, but had thrown off his oilskins and sou'-wester, and had wiped the rain from his face. There was no need to give his name; I knew without being told that he was Francesco's smuggling friend.

"Thank the saints, signor," said he in what was meant to be a whisper, but which sounded more like the roar of a foghorn. "The sea has gone down and not the boat; and I owe the Madonna four candles."

Swinging his lantern so that the light fell on my face, he continued musingly, "These storms are expensive affairs. Out of the land of dreams, signor? The

Inglesse have thick skulls, and a crack with a musket counts for little! Are you hungry?"

I shook my head and asked for my clothes, at which Peppo hung the lantern on a hook and laughed.

Then very gravely he fetched the two garments which now formed my wardrobe and held them up to view.

"You must have come straight from court!" and certainly he had ample grounds for his pleasantry.

"Pass me the coat," said I, and breathed more freely on finding the wallet safe.

"Your purse is in my locker; it has not been opened."

I had forgotten all about the purse, but felt very pleased all the same when it was restored to me.

"There's enough there to pay for a good many candles, Peppo!" I remarked, "and be sure I shan't forget you and your brave sailors."

"Oh, oh! we did not help you for a reward, signor; what we did was for the cause."

"And I am going to pay you for the voyage, my friend; otherwise a sail across to Caprera and back will leave you very much out of pocket."

"As you will about that, but we want no money for our work. Enough for us that we were helping to strike a blow against the Bourbon tyrants."

"We will talk again about it some time; just now I feel like sleeping."

Peppo left the cabin quietly, and I placed the precious packet under my head. The simple contact with it calmed my nerves, and ere long I dropped into a sound sleep.

The next day I was able to dress, and, though my head still pained considerably, I quite enjoyed getting out of Peppo's stuffy cabin into the open air.

The sailors received me with nods and smiles, and, though they were rough, uncouth fellows, my heart went out to them. One, while dressing the wound in my head, told me laughingly how the Bourbon soldiers had been balked of their prey.

"But the skiff went, signor. We could not save it," remarked Peppo.

"Never mind. You shall give Francesco money to buy another; that is, if he escaped the men on shore!"

Peppo grinned. "Francesco is slippery as an eel," said he, "and wriggles out of everything. While they watched for him on the beach, he would have reached some shelter in the town."

"I hope so, indeed! I wouldn't like him to be caught."

"'Twould be a short shrift for Francesco, and the government could, for once, hang a man with a clear conscience."

"Ah, the wicked ones!" growled a sailor. "I would hang them all, beginning with Francis himself, on one rope. They are wild beasts, not men."

"Muzio feels bitter against the brigands. They shot his father and two brothers," exclaimed Peppo.

"For smuggling?"

"No, no. Just for nothing at all; unless for amusement. But, the saints be praised, things will be altered when the brave Garibaldi gets to work."

"Oh, he will clean the stables!" exclaimed the man

Muzio; "and should he chop off the king's head, so much the better!"

I was sorry to hear the man speak so savagely, though I could hardly wonder at his hatred of the Bourbon ruler, which, indeed, was a common feeling among all the men of the little craft.

That same night the wind rose again, but the storm passed quickly without doing any damage, and for the remainder of the voyage we had quite pleasant weather.

It was a beautiful afternoon when we sighted the rocky island of Caprera, which lies off the north coast of Sardinia. Peppo ordered the boat to stand in as near as possible, and prepared to row me ashore in his light skiff.

Bidding the sturdy sailors farewell, I presented each with a piece of gold, receiving in return all kinds of good wishes. The crew cheered, Peppo pushed off, and very soon we shot into a small natural harbour, where a moderate-sized English-built yacht lay at anchor.

Having given the friendly smuggler an ample sum to pay for the sunken skiff, I shook his hand, crossed the tiny beach, and began the ascent to the white house where the "idol of Italy"—like a second Cincinnatus—lived in retirement.

At first the ground rises in a series of terraces, afterwards becoming precipitous, the bold rocks finally combining into a mountain chain. Here and there clusters of lentisk, arbutus, and myrtle dotted the patches of greensward, while numerous aromatic shrubs gave a pleasing odour to the balmy air. No one was in sight either to turn me back or bid me

welcome; so ever upward I toiled, till at the end of a half-hour I came in sight of an enclosed parterre.

Suddenly several hounds began to give tongue, and two or three came bounding toward me. Experience teaches me that most dogs, like human beings, recognise the difference between a good coat and tattered garments, and even Garibaldi's hounds seemed to share the general prejudice.

Appearances were certainly not in my favour. Wardrobes were scanty on the smuggler's boat, and I could not replace the long cloak, which, though not in the finest condition, had, like charity, covered a multitude of defects. Peppo's present of a sou'-wester, though kindly meant, did not improve my appearance, and I could hardly wonder that the General's canine friends wished to drive me from his domain. One tore off a hanging piece of my trousers, but, being a dainty dog, he disapproved of the taste, and, before the rest could sample my garments, a strong commanding voice ordered them to lie down.

A handsome youth with a frank open face, manly bearing, and the limbs of a Hercules, came across the parterre and sent the dogs back. Although we had not met before I knew that this was Menotti Garibaldi, son of the General, who had passed such a strange childhood in the wilds of South America.

"Signor Menotti Garibaldi?" said I questioningly.

"Yes. I am Menotti Garibaldi. What do you want?"

"I have come from Naples with a private message for your father."

Menotti looked at me more closely, and it was easy to see that he felt a certain amount of surprise.

"You are not a Neapolitan?" he asked at length.

"No, English; though I have lived in Naples for some time. I have been in the hands of the Philistines, as you see, but you shall know all about it after I have seen the General; my business with him is urgent."

"My father is at work somewhere on the land. Come with me to find him."

He led the way across the clearing, which was surrounded by an uncemented wall, and contained nurseries of cypresses, chestnuts, figs, and even specimens of the sugar-cane, in addition to the ordinary vegetables. The live stock comprised cows, horses, donkeys, and sheep. On the farther side of the island wild cattle managed to pick up a scanty living.

The view from the heights was magnificent. Beneath us the streak of silver sea studded with rocky islets glistened in the sunlight; before us rose the snow-capped peaks of Monte Rotondo in Corsica; to the east appeared the majestic, though rugged, grandeur of Sardinia.

"What a splendid prospect!" I exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"That is so," agreed Menotti, "though seen too often it becomes monotonous."

"Yes, I suppose the grandest scenery would grow tiring if one had to look upon it always."

Menotti laughed pleasantly, and we went on together.

"Ah, there is my father!" he exclaimed presently, and, looking in the direction indicated, I for the first time beheld the hero of two worlds.

He was hard at work with pick and spade making

a well, but hearing our footsteps he stopped to greet us.

Things have altered since then, but in those days half the world had Garibaldi on the brain. In the most gorgeous palace as in the humblest cottage, in the deep mine, in the trackless forest, in the burning deserts of Africa, and on the stormy waters of the Mediterranean men dreamed of the famous "Red Shirt." His name was in the mouths of millions, who judged him according to their particular ideas. To some he was simply an outlaw and bandit, but the great majority regarded him as the champion of all who were oppressed and down-trodden, and especially as the man who should make Italy a nation.

For in those days there was no Italy. Austria held Venetia and Lombardy; the rulers of Tuscany, Parma, and Modena were really Austrian vassals; French bayonets kept the Pope in possession of the provinces of Romagna; Sicily and the south lay under the heel of the Bourbons, who, for more than a century, had misgoverned their land.

In Piedmont and Sardinia alone, under the House of Savoy, were the people free, though during many years brave men throughout the peninsula had fought and died to make their country one and independent.

The war of 1859, when the French helped Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont and Sardinia, against the Austrians, resulted in Lombardy and the central provinces being joined to Piedmont; but the Austrians still held Venetia, while Naples and Sicily groaned beneath the oppression of their Bourbon king. Yet the inhabitants of these places were men of the same race, having the same language and customs.

Of the numerous heroes who had striven to make Italy one nation, instead of a number of petty states, Garibaldi was the most popular. His life had been one succession of extraordinary adventures, which, as a rule, we only read about in story-books. Born at Nice in 1807, he was, when still a young man, sentenced to death as a conspirator, and only escaped by sailing to South America. There for fourteen years he had lived the life of a soldier of fortune, though always to be found fighting on the side of freedom. There he raised the Italian Legion, when the *Camicia Rossa*, or Red Shirt, first came into being; and the fame of the great "Guerilla Chieftain" quickly spread over two hemispheres.

In 1848, with eighty-five of his best soldiers, he returned to his native land, and since that time, wherever people rose against their foreign rulers, there Garibaldi and his Red Shirts were to be found. In the intervals of peace he returned to his rocky home, and dug or planted potatoes according to the season of the year.

A single glance at him fascinated me. Of medium height, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, and with an iron frame, he looked the very embodiment of strength and activity. He was dressed as a peasant, but the statuesque head, leonine brow, and wonderful eyes belonged to a born prince of men. His features were straight, his hair was golden, and his thick bushy beard was of a tawny yellow. Frankness and generosity marked his face, and the simple kindly nature of the man looked through his eyes.

Many things he did, many words he wrote in later years that cast a shadow over his fair fame, but to

me he always remained the Garibaldi of Caprera; the true, brave, honest patriot, who loved Italy better than he loved his life.

That afternoon I stood before him in the guise of an outcast beggar; he received me with the courtesy he would have shown to Victor Emmanuel.

"An Englishman from Naples, father," explained Menotti. "He has come on a special mission, and was nearly captured by the Bourbons on the way."

Instantly the General's face lit up with excitement.

"An Englishman?" he said brightly. "Ah, signor, I love your land and its brave free people. I have never been without a friend in England; but come, let us go to the house. Menotti, we must find the lad some decent clothing."

"We can only change him from a Neapolitan Lazzarone into a Red Shirt!" cried he gaily. "The family wardrobe goes no further; but he shall choose for himself."

"Anything will be an improvement on these rags," I said. "They are not too sweet!"

The house, built of granite, was one storey high, with a flat roof, which could be used as a terrace, and surmounted by a cupola. Like its owner, the building was exceedingly simple; without the least attempt at ostentation.

Taking me to his room, Menotti produced a pair of gray trousers, a red shirt, and a slouch hat.

"It's a poor offering," remarked he merrily; "but tailors' shops are scarce in Caprera."

I thanked him heartily, and, after a wash, proceeded to put on the clean garments whose very touch made me feel like a new being.

As we approached the General's apartment a young girl with a beautiful olive complexion, fair hair, and dark bright eyes ran out.

"My sister Theresa," said Menotti. "My brother Ricciotti is in England. This is my father's room," and, thinking perhaps that I wished the interview to be private, he left me to enter it alone.

Garibaldi rose from his chair, and, asking me to be seated, plunged at once into the reasons for my visit.

Giving him the packet of papers, I told him how the soldiers had entered the hotel, and with what difficulty I had made my escape.

"And your two friends, did they get away?" he asked.

"No; they were thrown into the San Francesco prison."

His face clouded.

"How many more victims will be required?" he said thoughtfully. "We shall feel Giovanni's loss greatly; but he is an Italian, and it will be no hardship to him to die for Italy. With Signor Carter it is different. I would give my right hand to save him."

"Do you think——?" I began hesitatingly, but Garibaldi interrupted me.

"No, no!" he cried, "it would be madness, and simply supply another victim. The only chance lies in the success of my expedition. Now, if you will excuse me, I will read these papers. Meanwhile Menotti will entertain you. Cheer up, my boy; your friend's case is not altogether desperate."

Menotti proved such a pleasant fellow that I soon became quite friendly with him. He showed me the

various rooms, which contained many costly presents from the General's ardent admirers, and related many charming anecdotes of his father's life.

In one apartment, known as the Flag-Room, hung a collection of flags and trophies from many a stubborn battlefield, and amongst them one which I was yet to see borne into the thickest of the fray. It was black, the centre being occupied by a gigantic picture of Vesuvius in a state of eruption.

"My father brought that from South America in 1848," said Menotti. "It was specially worked for him by the ladies of Monte Video, and he values it very highly."

The time passed rapidly while the young fellow related proudly stories of his father's adventures by sea and land in the western hemisphere, and especially of the marvellous fight at Salto Saint Antonio, where, for eight hours, one hundred and eighty-four Italians, under their heroic leader, held fifteen hundred of their enemy at bay!

"And the famous red shirt?" I asked. "How came your father to choose that badge?"

Menotti laughed heartily.

"The *camicia rossa* has a more humble origin than is suspected," he answered frankly. "You know that in Argentina there are several *saladéros*, vast establishments for slaughtering and salting cattle?"

"Yes, I have read accounts of them."

"At that time the workmen in the *saladéros* wore scarlet woollen shirts which were supplied by a merchant in Monte Video. Now, during the war with Buenos Ayres this poor fellow had a large stock which he could not get rid of, and was willing to

sell cheap. Just at that time the Legion was formed, and the government, on the look-out for a bargain, bought the lot to help clothe their Italian soldiers. Rather a commonplace origin, don't you think?"

It certainly was not romantic, but I could not help laughing when I thought of the marvellous legends that had been put forth to account for the origin of Garibaldi's uniform, and Menotti joined in my mirth.

Of one little memento I refrained from speaking, nor during my stay at Caprera was it mentioned by any one. It was a lock of hair hung in an ebony frame in the General's room, and I knew instinctively it had belonged to his wife, Anita. No woman more brave or tender ever lived; no woman ever made a more complete sacrifice of her life than this Brazilian heroine, who followed her husband by flood and field, who nursed his sick and wounded, who put courage into the hearts of his men, and who finally died in a peasant's cottage on the Ravenna shore, when, in August 1849, she was flying with her husband from the Austrian soldiery.

My guardian had often told me the last part of the pathetic story.

When the French took possession of Rome in 1849 Garibaldi retreated with three thousand of his devoted followers. In the little republic of San Marino he induced his men to lay down their arms, while he with a few chosen companions escaped in boats. A storm dispersed the miniature fleet, and the chief was stranded on the shore of Ravenna. His few friends were almost all captured and shot; he was left alone with his dying wife. In his strong arms he carried

her to a peasant's hut, where she breathed her last; and even before her body grew cold, the grief-stricken husband was forced to flee for his life.

It was a pathetic story, and that lock of hair in the ebony frame conveyed a world of meaning to those who knew.

Outside the house Menotti showed me the improvements his father was making, laughingly assuring me that I should certainly be set to work next morning.

"My father has a mania for work," said he, "and thinks every one shares his enthusiasm. Did you ever hear of his reception of the Freemasons?"

"No."

"Well, it was like this. A deputation had been appointed to present him with an address. We were making a new road at the time and were very busy, for my father doesn't love skulkers. The deputation appeared, and were introduced by the spokesman.

"And you are really all masons?' queried my father. 'That is capital. We have a lot of masonry to be done. Menotti, fetch our kind friends some picks and spades;' and within five minutes the deputation was hard at work digging and laying stones!"

"Thanks for the warning," I exclaimed, "but, fortunately, I am not a mason."

"That doesn't matter. You can dig in the garden or plant potatoes!"

"We shall see; meanwhile your father is beckoning to us."

"And looking rather glum. I'm afraid you've brought him bad news."

"I hope not. I sincerely hope not."

Garibaldi certainly looked less cheerful than when I first saw him, but gave no explanation during the evening, and we chatted the whole time on the most ordinary topics.

Theresa retired early, and then the General said abruptly, "Signor Howard, do you wish to help your friends?"

"With my life, if necessary, General!"

"Then you must wear the red shirt in earnest. I am about to undertake a most dangerous expedition. It will probably fail, but it may succeed; and then, unless your friends are shot before, we shall get them out of prison. Think over what I have said; but mind, if you join me, your life is no longer your own; it belongs to the cause. You shall give me your answer in the morning. Good night!"

"Well," said Menotti, smiling as he showed me to my room, "you've come off as badly as the Freemasons!"

"Better!" I answered, "as now I've a right to wear my uniform."

"Then you will join us?"

"Most decidedly."

"You're a brave fellow, and I shall be proud to have you as a comrade."

Shaking his hand, I bade him good night, and, having closed the door, undressed slowly, wondering all the while what the General intended to do.

CHAPTER III

MINE AND COUNTERMINE

"Do you wish to help your friends?"

The question repeated itself as I lay awake thinking of my guardian shut up in a Neapolitan prison.

What did Garibaldi mean to do? What was this dangerous expedition of which he had spoken? Did he intend to make war on the King of Naples with a handful of volunteers? Concerning any other man, such an idea would have been preposterous; but one could never reckon on anything Garibaldi would or would not do. Besides, his influence was so great that the craziest schemes, when sanctioned by him, assumed quite a sober air.

Difficulties had a knack of vanishing when Garibaldi faced them, and there were few things the Red Shirt would not face for a United Italy. That was the dream of his life, I well knew; the one fond hope of his heart. Italy free—from north to south, from east to west; one nation under one ruler. The dream was bound to be realised, but few men in those days thought to see the reality.

The kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont alone was free; but its king could not move, or only very cautiously. A hand stretched out to Venice would bring the Austrian cannon about his ears; Napoleon

III., in order to pacify his own Catholic subjects, safeguarded the Pope, and was not likely to allow Victor Emmanuel to seize Naples; at least not without a heavy bribe. Certainly in 1859 he had helped the Piedmontese against the Austrians, but they had to give him the districts of Nice and Savoy in payment; and it was thought he only wanted a decent pretext to take over the Island of Sardinia.

Yet something stirring was on foot, and for the sake of my friends I hoped Garibaldi would be mad enough to make a dash at Naples. The very possibility brought a feeling of relief, and I slept soundly till Menotti wakened me in the morning.

We all sat down together to the simple breakfast, and the primitive scene was certainly not of a nature to encourage hopes of conquering a kingdom. But for the statuesque head and strong purposeful face of my host I might have thought myself in an ordinary farmhouse. The conversation turned upon potatoes and roots, the price of cows, the best system of drainage and road-making, on all of which subjects I was profoundly ignorant.

Garibaldi, on the contrary, proved a mine of information; he might have earned his living as a teacher of agriculture, or even as a farm-labourer, which I take to be still more difficult. Out of pure mischief Menotti dragged me into the conversation, putting questions about the rotation of crops, the value of lime as a manure, and sundry mysteries of like character.

After breakfast we abandoned theory for practice, and I was half afraid the General would set me to milking the cows. Happily he had himself done

that earlier in the morning, and I had only to assist in clearing a patch of ground required for planting. We worked on steadily for three awful hours, when, with one foot on his spade, the Chief suddenly said, "The steamer leaves La Maddalena for Genoa this afternoon. I must write my letters. Menotti, there will be just time for you and our young friend to finish this patch. He must go in the steamer."

Menotti gravely replied that it could be done, but when his father had gone his serious air changed to mischievous laughter. Personally I felt entitled to a certain amount of pity and consolation. My hands were blistered, my face was wet with perspiration; all my limbs ached with the unusual exercise. Digging is an art for the professional; it should not be entrusted to amateurs.

Young Garibaldi advised me to leave the rest to him, but that was out of the question. I had put my hand to the plough, or rather the spade, and must not look back. Indeed, my neck ached so that I had not the slightest desire to turn my head unnecessarily. To Menotti, a young giant with splendid frame, magnificent muscles, the strength of an ox, and the dexterity acquired by practice, the task was merely gentle exercise; to me it was downright hard fagging work, and I began to understand why a superintendent's berth rarely goes begging. Nevertheless I stuck to the digging, throwing spadeful for spadeful with Menotti, who kept up a fire of good-natured chaff at my awkwardness. However, the work was done at last, and we returned to the house carrying our implements.

The Chief joined us at the midday meal, but he

mentioned nothing of the approaching journey. All his thoughts seemed centred in a new kind of cabbage which he intended to plant during the afternoon. Half-an-hour later I followed him to his room, and the door was shut on Garibaldi the farmer. The planter of cabbages had disappeared; I was face to face with a leader of men. His directions were brief and to the point.

"The steamer will carry you to Genoa," said he. "You will go on to Quarto and find your way to the Villa Spinola, where Colonel Vecchj lives. These letters are for him. That being done, place yourself at his service, and obey his orders as you would mine. On the safe delivery of these documents will hang the lives of men. I need say no more."

Taking the papers I concealed them in my belt, and promised that they should be given over without fail to Colonel Vecchj. Ten minutes later I was walking to the shore with Menotti, who had lent me a cloak to cover the red shirt.

A smart boat lay moored in the little cove. I took my place, and Menotti pushing her off jumped in. Then I bade adieu to rocky Caprera. My young friend asked nothing as to the object of my journey; only, as we neared the steamer, he said half playfully, "I think perhaps it would be as well if you forget how to speak Italian during the voyage. Our people are inquisitive, and a single word may cause mischief."

"Thanks; I'll take the hint. And now good-bye; much obliged for your hospitality."

"Don't speak of it," replied he merrily. "We are indebted to you!"

"I've left my mark at Caprera at all events."

"You must come back some day, and help to eat the cabbages. Well, here we are at the vessel; no doubt we shall meet again shortly."

He waited till I reached the vessel's deck, waved his hand in farewell, and was soon scudding back to his father's islet.

A number of people had gathered on the pier at La Maddalena, and it was evident they were much interested in the stranger who had just crossed from Caprera. The passengers, too, eyed me curiously, and several endeavoured to enter into conversation; but, remembering Menotti's warning, I answered in English, which, fortunately, they did not understand.

The last bell rang, those who were not going on the voyage had cleared off, when the people on shore raised a cry that another passenger was coming. Gazing over the ship's side I observed a woman hurrying along the pier. With true Italian politeness the captain waited till she was safely on board; the ropes were then cast off, and the steamer moved slowly forward.

The woman who had thus nearly missed her passage impressed me most strongly. She was young, nicely dressed, and very beautiful. Her eyes were large and black, and her face reminded me of the portraits which the old Italian masters delighted to paint. I wondered at first how she came to be travelling alone in this manner, but she soon went below, and my thoughts returned to my own affairs.

Had my guardian and Giovanni been free, I should at this moment have felt quite happy. I was one of

the Red Shirts, a comrade of the great Garibaldi, an actual actor in the opening of what promised to be a startling drama.

Standing there, alone in the crowd, I dreamed the most splendid dreams. I should become famous, my name would be wafted over Europe, and England would sing the praises of Garibaldi's boy-lieutenant. Men of experience do not dream, but every boy worth his salt conjures up visions; and very real they are, for the time. And into the dreams of the manly boy there rarely enters anything sordid, or mean, or ignoble. They are bright with nobility, humanity, and truth; they are tinged with justice and generosity, with enthusiasm for what is pure and good. The world owes more than it wots of to the fanciful dreaming of its youth!

The evening was gloriously fine, but the keen wind drove many of the passengers below, and I was glad to take a turn up and down the nearly deserted deck in order to keep warm. During one of these walks I came face to face with the beautiful stranger, who, well wrapped up, seemed to enjoy the sharp bracing air. She was toying with a gold bangle, and, as I stepped aside to let her pass, it slipped and fell on the deck. Stooping swiftly I picked it up, and presented it to her. She smiled brightly, giving me many thanks in the soft tongue of her country. For a moment I was tempted to disregard Menotti's warning, but an odd feeling restrained me, and I replied in English. Over her face there flashed a swift expression of surprised annoyance.

"Am I mistaken? Are you not Signor Howard?"

It was my turn to express surprise.

"My name is Howard," said I coldly.

"Ah, then I have not failed. But Giovanni—how foolish of him! he said you speak the Italian like a native."

Giovanni! I looked hastily along the deck. Fortunately there was no one at hand to overhear the conversation.

"Giovanni?" I replied. "What of him?"

The woman smiled; all trace of anxiety had disappeared.

"Listen," said she softly. "I will speak his other name—Rugieri. You see I put myself in your power, but your face tells me I can trust you. Well, Giovanni said 'the English boy'—but really you are a young man—'has gone to the rock. He will return from La Maddalena. You must meet him; there is work for him to do.' But I understood you spoke the Italian."

"But," began I, taken off my guard, "Giovanni is in——"

Stopping me by a swift gesture, the woman said, "Bolts and bars are not for him. He has escaped, is in Genoa, and awaits you. It has to do with the Englishman."

"With my guardian?" I asked excitedly. "Tell me of him. Has he escaped also? Is he with Giovanni?"

Her beautiful eyes filled with tears; she shook her head sadly. "Alas, no. The poor gentleman is in the dungeons underneath the city. It is said that he will be shot."

"And Giovanni has left him? The scoundrel! After what——"

Again the woman stopped me.

"You are unjust," said she, and the foreign accent rendered her English delightfully piquant. "Giovanni could do nothing by himself; but he has thought out a plan; this is why he wishes you to go straight to him."

Surely no lad was ever placed in a more miserable position. Garibaldi had trusted me with the lives of men; the safety of my beloved guardian, perhaps, trembled in the other scale. Reading something of my despair, the woman said softly, "Surely you do not hesitate?"

"No," I answered firmly, "but I must first do my errand. Afterwards——"

"It may be too late. Let me help you. We are all working for the same end; all under the same chief. One messenger will do as well as another. I will carry the message safely while you meet Giovanni."

Shaking my head I answered resolutely, "It cannot be. I must do my duty to Garibaldi first."

"Poor boy," exclaimed the woman tenderly, "it is a terrible trial for you; but we must look on the bright side of things. Perhaps you may be in time, though I left Giovanni very anxious. Stay, read for yourself what he says," and she handed me a sealed letter. I pounced upon it at once.

"C. is in imminent danger. Five minutes' delay may prove fatal.—G. R."

Watching my face the woman said sadly, "Is there then no hope? If only you could see him a moment on your way it might count for much; but that perhaps is impossible. Genoa is a big town."

"And I am going to Quarto."

"To Quarto?" She could hardly conceal her delight. "My dear young friend," she exclaimed joyfully, "the matter arranges itself. You will pass through the very quarter where Giovanni is staying! I can take you straight to the house, and the General's business will not be delayed half-an-hour. How very fortunate! Now you can smile again."

I really felt greatly relieved at this happy way out of the difficulty, for with this experienced lady as a guide, I was likely to gain rather than lose time on the journey. So I went to bed and slept peacefully, with the precious papers under my head, only wakening in time to join the other passengers at breakfast.

My newly-formed acquaintance remained in her cabin, nor did she appear till the evening, when we were within sight of Genoa. Then she came on deck and we walked together, speculating on the nature of Giovanni's plan for rescuing my guardian.

Night was fast closing in on us as the steamer reached her moorings, and I was impatient to be ashore. However, we got off at last, the absence of luggage and the inherent virtue of a gold coin expediting our departure.

An official having called a carriage, the lady entered, and I was about to follow, when a young man stepping into the light thrown from a lamp called me by name. I looked round in amazement. The young fellow came closer, smiling in my face.

"Have you forgotten me?" he asked. "I am Carlo Rugieri."

I remembered him well, though we had not met for two years; he was Giovanni's son.

Taking my arm he said, "One moment. May I ask where you are going?"

"To see your father."

"Then you will waste time."

"But he has sent for me specially. It is a matter of life and death. My guardian is imprisoned at Naples, and we fear every minute lest he should be executed."

"And my father is going to set him free?"

"We intend to try."

"And does the lady belong to the conspirators?"

At this my acquaintance of the steamship came to the door of the carriage, her face showing that something was wrong.

"You here, Carlo Rugieri?" she cried.

The young fellow removed his hat. "It is indeed I, Countess," he answered blandly.

"Why are you delaying your friend?"

"Because, Countess, things have altered since you left for La Maddalena. My father is no longer here, and it is best for Signor Howard to do the other work first. It is important that he should deliver his papers at the Villa Spinola. Afterwards——"

"But my guardian?" I interposed.

"Is still in prison, where he is likely to stay in spite of anything we can do. And now, Countess, what is your intention? The house at Quarto is empty, though the police are keeping a strict watch on it. As for me, I am going to the Villa Spinola."

The woman whom young Rugieri addressed as Countess behaved splendidly. I did not understand in the least what was happening, except that these two were pitted against each other, and Rugieri would win. Apparently her own danger, whatever it

was, counted for nothing; her distress being all on my account. We were foiled for the present, she said, but doubtless Giovanni would find some fresh plan, while I might count on her doing everything in her power for my guardian's release. Then she thanked Carlo gracefully for saving her from danger, concluding with the assurance that at some future time she would endeavour to repay his kindness.

Still bareheaded, Carlo bowed his thanks, closed the carriage door, asked the Countess where she would be driven, gave the driver his orders, and finished with another polite bow as the carriage drove off.

"Now for the Villa Spinola!" he exclaimed gaily. "I've ordered a vehicle; here you are; jump in."

"How do you know where I wish to go?"

"Easily. Your name is on the public list of criminals at Naples. You are known to have had dealings with Garibaldi; you have come straight from Caprera to Genoa; it would be strange were you to turn aside from the conspirators' headquarters. Had you landed anywhere on the coasts of Naples you would now be in prison. Here, of course, every one is free to plot at his pleasure against foreign governments. It is like your London."

I listened like one dreaming. In truth, my wits, only half awake, were still endeavouring to grasp the significance of the recent tragedy, or comedy.

Carlo awakened me with a strange question.

"Are your papers safe?" he asked.

I ran my hand hastily along the inside of my belt: the papers were safe. Carlo seemed rather surprised, and said, "Tell me about the voyage and your sympathetic friend."

Accordingly I related how the Countess had come on board at La Maddalena, how she had given me Giovanni's letter and message, and how deeply she pitied the fate of my poor guardian. I told, too, of the latter's desperate condition, and finished by regretting Giovanni's hurried departure.

Carlo tried to listen gravely, but the whole time he was bubbling over with ill-suppressed merriment, and finally, to my intense disgust, broke into a hearty laugh.

"Excuse me," said he. "I'm very sorry, but it's all so comical. I can just picture the Countess. Didn't she cry?"

"I believe she did," I replied coldly; and Carlo went off into another fit of laughter.

"What a woman!" he exclaimed. "What an admirable actress! Look, Howard, I'm betraying secrets, but it is for your guardian's sake. He was always a good friend to me. First of all make your mind easy; Signor Carter is in prison, but there is no question of putting him to death—at least not yet."

"But your father's message?"

"My father has not been to Genoa; he is hiding in Naples."

"But the note is in his handwriting!"

"Let me see it."

Striking a light he looked at the letter and handed it back.

"Not worth the paper it's written on," said he abruptly. "Still, I can understand how you were caught."

"Do you mean the letter's not genuine?"

"I mean that the whole thing was a conspiracy to

get possession of your papers. Do you think the Bourbons are asleep? They know what is going on. Had you gone into the house at Quarto it is probable you would never have left it alive."

I lay back against the cushions feeling more dazed than ever.

"Then the Countess was in the plot?" said I at length.

"She planned it."

"Lucky for me you discovered it! Besides, you have done Garibaldi a great service."

My companion shifted uneasily.

"Yes," said he thoughtfully. "That is the worst of the business."

I began to fear my brain must be softening; everything seemed in such a hopeless muddle.

Noticing my perplexity, Carlo proceeded to explain himself.

"Does it seem strange to you that all the world is not on the side of your demi-god?" he asked. "I am a Neapolitan. I love my country and religion. Garibaldi attacks both. Why should I help this brigand and his pack of cut-throats to lay waste my own land?"

"Yet your father is with us, heart and soul."

"We cannot all think alike," he answered in a troubled voice.

"And you yourself have done us a good turn now!"

"For your sake, and out of gratitude to Signor Carter. There is also another reason, but that you would not understand," and there was a painful sadness in his voice.

"Then in the future we shall meet as enemies, Carlo?"

"On the battlefield. Nowhere else."

He was evidently indisposed for further conversation, and as I had much to think about we proceeded in silence.

All war is terrible, but this civil strife which divides households, setting father against son, brother against brother, is peculiarly hateful. I pitied Carlo very much, because he would take the field knowing his father was in the ranks of his enemies. Then I thought of the clever woman who had so thoroughly deceived me, and felt humbled at having been so completely fooled. If I turned out to be no better soldier than diplomatist, my services to the Red Shirts would not be worth much. How Menotti and my future comrades would laugh should the story get known!

My face and ears burned like fire. I felt angry and humiliated at having been treated in such a way; but the lesson did me good, nevertheless, as it showed I was not quite as clever a fellow as I had imagined. And the learning of that lesson is often the beginning of a sound education.

CHAPTER IV

ONE OF THE THOUSAND

CRASH! I had fallen half asleep, but the noise, the violent shock, and the abrupt stopping of the vehicle wakened me with a start. The carriage door was swinging open; Carlo had disappeared. Instinctively, yet half ashamed of the suspicion, I felt for the papers; they were still in my belt.

What had happened? Perhaps the animals had stumbled and Carlo had gone to the driver's assistance. That seemed to be the most likely solution. Though it takes time to write these thoughts they flashed through my mind in a second, and almost as quickly I was at the open door. Darkness prevented me from seeing clearly, but two or three things I gathered during the hasty survey. The street was narrow, so narrow that the carriage appeared wedged in between the opposite buildings, which were of immense height. One horse lay kicking on the ground; a shadowy figure stood at the head of the other. Half-a-dozen more figures were pressing towards me, and it was not too dark to catch the sheen of steel. I was far too angry to feel afraid. Truly Garibaldi had selected a fine messenger to do his errand!

The dark figures approached nearer.

"Surrender peaceably!" exclaimed one in advance,

"and we will do you no harm. Resist, and you are a dead man."

I levelled my revolver at the speaker in answer, retorting, "Move another step and I fire!"

It was ludicrous to see how smartly the fellow halted. Suddenly a blow from behind sent my weapon flying into the air, and I was lightly grappled by a pair of strong arms. My opponents ran forward quickly, but I succeeded in wrenching myself free from the man who held me. The situation was desperate enough, but there was one thing in my favour. The strangers evidently wished to settle the business without noise. With the exception of the leader not a man had spoken, and though doubtless all were well armed, no shot had been fired.

The reason was simple. Being Neapolitans, they feared the people, knowing they would receive short shrift at their hands. This reflection not only gave me fresh courage, but pointed out my best plan.

Dealing a blow at my nearest opponent, which sent him toppling over, I turned and ran in the darkness, shouting wildly, "Garibaldi! *Viva* Garibaldi! Rescue for Garibaldi!"

The success of this manœuvre even exceeded my hopes. Windows went up, heads came forth, and the air was rent by fierce shouts of "Garibaldi! Garibaldi!"

On I ran, panting, with the pack at my heels. They were reckless now, and one, throwing prudence to the wind, opened fire with his pistol.

"Garibaldi!" cried I again, giving my lungs full play; and "Garibaldi" sounded on all sides. One could conjure with that name in those days. The

whole quarter was aroused, and men came trooping into the crooked street. Daylight would have revealed a curious scene. Some had dressed fully, the majority wore nothing but shirts and trousers; but all were eager to help their favourite hero. They ran along brandishing formidable clubs and long keen knives, while the women at the open windows urged them forward with shrill cries.

Alarmed for their own safety, my assailants separated and vanished, leaving me standing in an open doorway watching the strange sight. By this time numerous torches had made their appearance, and the light from one revealing my red shirt—for I had thrown off the cumbrous cloak in my flight—instantly aroused a new clamour.

Crowding around me the mob cheered for Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel, and *Italia Unita!* My simple uniform sent them wild with delight; I was in danger of being squeezed to death, and almost regretted my escape from my enemies. Those who could not obtain a glimpse of me believed I was Garibaldi himself—an idea which greatly added to the excitement.

I endeavoured to back into the house but the passage was blocked by a surging mob, all shouting and yelling together. Excessive popularity may be a fine thing, but it has its drawbacks! Shouting my loudest, I begged the people to let me go, telling them that I carried important news, and that Garibaldi would be angry at the delay. For some time all my endeavours were useless. I felt like the fisherman in the "Arabian Nights," who let the genie out of the bottle! At length a huge fellow with brawny

limbs and a chest like that of Hercules came to the rescue.

"Where is it you would go, signor?" he shouted, and, hearing my answer, lifted me bodily on his shoulders.

At this the mob cheered enthusiastically. Two or three stout fellows cleared a little space, others formed up behind like a bodyguard, and gradually we resolved ourselves into a procession, noisy and straggling, but quite good-humoured. A woman pushed a tricoloured flag into my hand, some one started the Garibaldian hymn, and away we went on our triumphant march to the Villa Spinola.

My amateur steed acquitted himself well, except when carried away by excitement he forgot his burden and frantically tried to wave his arms. On one of these occasions I managed to slip down, anxious to avoid my undignified and not too safe position.

We proceeded without mishap to the Villa Spinola, where the crowd, after rendering itself hoarse and wakening the neighbourhood by round after round of cheering, quietly dispersed. Hearing the noise the inmates of the villa had quickly dressed, and Colonel Vecchj himself met me at the door. I gave the all-important papers to him, and recounted the last part of my adventures; of Carlo and the mysterious countess I said nothing.

"An organised plot," commented the colonel. "They must have received secret information. You were lucky in escaping! However, the danger is over, and the Chief will be pleased that his papers are safe; but you look very tired. To-morrow we will have a talk; at present I prescribe supper and a bed."

I answered laughingly that he was a capital physician; and indeed it was pleasant to undress and lie down, though I could not sleep. My mind was busily going back over the strange events of the past two days. I tried to piece the various portions together into a connected story, but the result was not exactly successful. It was plain that the Neapolitan government had a shrewd inkling of the conspiracy, and knew of my part in it. That I could easily understand from the arrest of my guardian and Giovanni; there was little mystery in that, or in the clever scheme which the countess had so nearly worked out. The difficulty came later, and associated itself with Carlo. Why should he have interfered to do his own side harm? He had spoken of gratitude to Mr. Carter, of friendship to myself, and I had accepted the reasons. Now I began to doubt their truth. How came we to be attacked in that narrow street? Why had he disappeared so suddenly? What had become of him?

Yet, had he wished to steal the papers, he might have done so easily while I slept. The whole thing perplexed me; it was full of mystery. I could make nothing of it one way or the other, yet I could not think that Carlo had tricked me. However, the papers were safely delivered, Giovanni had escaped from prison, and for the present my guardian was in no fear of death.

How unfortunate that I had not learned from Carlo his father's hiding-place. I had not thought of this before; now I could not forget it. With Giovanni's help it might be possible to set my guardian free. This thought haunted me all the next day, and in the

evening, as I stood musing outside the house, I was startled by a ragged-looking fellow thrusting a scrap of paper into my hand.

"I am ill, and wish to see you. You can trust the messenger.—CARLO."

So great was my astonishment that I bade the man lead on at once, only remembering when too late that I was quite unarmed. This would not matter, perhaps, if the note was genuine; but, thinking of the countess, I began to doubt.

Shuffling along, the fellow avoided the best parts of the city, and plunged into a labyrinth of narrow lanes and crooked streets through which a vehicle could only pass with difficulty. At last he stopped before a house in a quiet alley and waited for me to join him.

"In here," said he brusquely, opening the door, and I followed him into a long dim passage. Walking nearly to the end, he pushed open a second door and bade me enter. The room was large, scantily furnished, and lit only by a smoky lamp. A bed stood in one corner, and on it lay a man whose head was swathed in bandages. The poor fellow could not rise; but stretched out his hand, saying, "Thanks for coming. I was afraid you might mistrust me."

My face flushed a little; but, speaking cheerfully, I asked what had happened.

"It was the countess," he said feebly. "She was a match for us both, and nearly won after all."

"The countess? You're dreaming! What had she to do with it?"

"She must have been in luck's way. Those were her men who attacked the carriage."

"And knocked you on the head?"

"Yes. I jumped out quickly when the horses stopped, and got a bang which stunned me. Oh, the countess is a marvellous woman! I shouldn't have allowed her out of my sight."

"She's lost the game, at all events. Thanks to you, the papers have been delivered. I shall never forget your kindness."

His lips twitched nervously, as though the subject displeased him; so, to turn his thought, I asked him where his father was hiding. To my astonishment his face betrayed the greatest apprehension and dismay.

"My father?" he gasped. "Surely you wouldn't join him? It would be absurd, impossible! Think for a moment! At Naples you would be in the midst of foes; your name is already on the proscribed list; you would be arrested at once, and, if not, all your energies would be exhausted in dodging the police. How would that help your guardian? The idea is madness. Besides," he continued more calmly, "how can I tell where my father is now? Even his last address would be of little use; you couldn't possibly find the place; it is in the lowest quarter of the town, where, for your shirt, a man would cut your throat. Listen to me and take warning; do not venture into Naples unless you are tired of life!"

"But I can't abandon my guardian while there is a chance of helping him!"

"There is no chance, and your meddling would only do harm. At present the authorities have no intention of putting him to death; they prefer holding him as a hostage."

"But your father escaped!"

He shot a keen glance at me.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "but there are not many men in Italy like Giovanni Rugieri."

"Then you will really give me no help?"

"It is impossible. I can only tell you that my father is at liberty. Beyond this I know nothing except that you will not remain alive in Naples twenty-four hours."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"I am going to procure a musket with which to fight the brigands."

Finding that I could get nothing more from him, I wished him farewell and left the house, bitterly disappointed. Yet calmer reflection showed me Carlo was probably right. I could do nothing in Naples, and should only be a hindrance to Giovanni. I could be of more use to Garibaldi, and, from remarks let fall by my new comrades, I found that he intended making a desperate attack on the Bourbon rule. I knew nothing definite of his plans; but events moved quickly, and, five days after my arrival in Genoa, preparations for some daring enterprise were in full swing.

The Villa Spinola became an armoury; rifles, cartridges, and powder poured in from all quarters. Strange men, with hard, resolute faces, paid mysterious visits to Quarto. The air was full of whispered rumours and surmises.

Then the Chief came, and I had no more time for brooding. From morning till night, and very often half through the night, all was bustle and animation. To the chosen few the word had gone forth that Garibaldi needed his followers, and they came. Tried veterans like Türr and Bixio, youthful scions of noble

houses, lawyers, doctors, poets, artisans, and peasants flocked to the rendezvous as to a banquet. Everything was left. Ease, comfort, happiness, social position, ambition, all were thrown aside at the summons.

The widow Cairoli, whose eldest son had died fighting against the Austrians, brought his three brothers—an offering to the independence of Italy! Great ladies brought their gold, peasant women their humble mites, to help the cause. Young lads who should have been in the schoolroom, trudged manfully to Quarto, begging with tears in their eyes to be enrolled under Garibaldi's banner. They laughed at the idea of danger and hardships. They would march barefoot to the world's end, live on bread and water, sleep on the rocks with a loose stone for pillow, walk to the cannon's mouth, if only they could don the red shirt and be ranked with Garibaldi's volunteers.

Idle vapouring, many thought and said, but these knew nothing of the old Chief's marvellous magnetic personality. I was to witness it later in the storm and stress of battle, when a simple frown would send men headlong to death; a smile be considered ample reward for feats of the most daring bravery.

But even here at Quarto, in the most everyday matters, all were eager to do his bidding. His word was law: never to be questioned. At a word from him, youngsters, who, hearing a whisper of the gathering, had trudged scores of weary miles to join the expedition, turned back.

"Ah, Guiseppe," he would say pleasantly, "ah, Pietro! No keeping a secret from you. I'm glad you have come because I can speak freely. There is work afoot, and I depend on you to keep your district

up to the mark. Must leave some smart fellows behind! You will not fail me, eh, Guiseppe? Pietro?" and the lads, fascinated by his kindly smile, would return to their homes with hearts still further aflame for the cause.

So the work of selection or rejection went on; order was gradually evolved out of chaos, and by the night of May 5, 1860, all was ready.

From Quarto to Nervi the shore was lined with enthusiastic volunteers, waiting for the word to begin one of the most marvellous expeditions ever recorded in history. Some lay on the rocks, others sat in small boats, all eagerly looking across the waters of the bay towards the lights of two steamers.

Suddenly a muffled cheer arose: the steamers were in motion! Along the line ran a glad whisper, "Garibaldi has them!" The men on the rocks sprang to their feet, the rowers grasped their oars; the time had come! The two vessels, the *Piedmonte* and *Lombardo*, approached nearer; the silence on the shore was broken. Little boats darted to and fro, carrying men and guns and returning for more. For hours the work continued, till, in the early morning, all were aboard one or other of the vessels, which slowly steamed along the coast. The famous "Thousand" had started, and we had time to reflect on the nature of the enterprise.

As my young readers are probably aware, Sicily formed part of the kingdom of Naples. Well, we were about to invade Sicily; to fight pitched battles with the royal troops, to overthrow the power of the Bourbons, to make Sicily independent. With any leader other than Garibaldi this would have been crass

folly; as it was, wise men shook their heads and prophesied disaster.

We were entirely without allies. Victor Emmanuel dared not help, he was afraid of Austria and France; the King of Naples had a well-equipped army of 120,000 men, of whom 30,000 were in Sicily. He had, besides, an organised and powerful fleet, which could have sent us to the bottom in five minutes.

We numbered a thousand, our navy consisting of two passenger steamers! Desperate odds, croaked the wiseacres, and they were right, Yet on board those crowded vessels there was no shadow of fear, nor even of doubt. Garibaldi stood at the head, and with him for leader all must go well! During the voyage I was separated from him. He had embarked on the *Piedmonte*, while I found quarters with the gallant Bixio on the *Lombardo*.

At Talamone we spent two busy days drilling and embarking extra stores, while Türr, with cool impudence, went off to the fort of Orbitello, returning with four field-pieces besides a quantity of ammunition. Running down to San Stefano, we took in a quantity of coal and again stood out to sea, when the arms and a number of red shirts were distributed.

The real dangers of the expedition were now beginning. The news of our departure from Quarto had been telegraphed to every part of the Continent, and it was by no means certain how the different governments would take it. No one thought England would interfere, but France might; and of course the King of Naples would do everything in his power to thwart us.

The day passed in an anxious look-out for the

Neapolitan cruisers. Owing to an unfortunate mishap the two steamers parted company; the *Piedmonte* disappeared, and the *Lombardo* was left to pursue the journey alone. Hour after hour we steamed on over the sparkling waters. The shades of evening fell and night followed. No one on the *Lombardo* thought of sleep. We crowded the decks, staring into the gathering gloom, and speculating on the chance of meeting a hostile ship. A sudden cry from the look-out sent a thrill of excitement through the whole of us. A ship was approaching, and the men asked each other anxiously whether she would be friend or foe.

We were in poor condition for a sea-fight, but no one dreamed of surrender; and a ripple of applause greeted Bixio's order to clear the deck for action. Guns and rifles were loaded, the men moved swiftly to their appointed quarters, resolutely determined to go to the bottom rather than lower the tricolour flag.

Nearer and nearer the stranger came—a dark patch on the water. We waited silent and grim for the expected summons to surrender. Suddenly we heard in the clear ringing tones we knew so well, “Is that you, Bixio?”

Our leader's reply was drowned amid the thunderous outburst of cheering that broke the silence of the night: “*Viva Garibaldi!*”—we were united!

The remainder of the night passed without incident, and next day we sighted the harbour of Marsala. There was, however, still cause for anxiety. The Neapolitan cruisers were on our track, and why they did not forthwith demolish our crazy steamers must ever remain a mystery. It was said they were awed by the presence of two British vessels, the gun-

boat *Intrepid* and the steamship *Argus*, which lay in the harbour; but, however that may be, it is certain our landing was not molested.

With a fisherman acting as pilot we went full speed ahead, the *Piedmonte* bringing to safely at the mole. Our ship was not so lucky, grounding on the mud; but, with the assistance of some fishing-boats, the men were got on shore, and we immediately proceeded to unload. Every one worked with feverish energy; the boats were packed with stores and ammunition, and within two hours we had landed the whole, down to the last cartridge.

Garibaldi stood watching us as we pulled off with the last load.

"Good lads!" said he, smiling. "The worst part is well over. One other little task, and you will have finished. We've got into Sicily, and, as we don't want to get out again in a hurry, why, the ships may as well be burned. Off you go, and the flames will tell the enemy we've come to stay!"

An uproarious "*Viva!*" answered the remark, and, pulling back rapidly, we soon set the doomed vessels on fire.

"We're in for it now, and no mistake!" said one fellow, as, lying to on our oars, we watched the fiery jets. "Those burning spars speak more plainly than a dozen proclamations."

"The General means them to," answered another, "and the warning's intended as much for us as for the enemy," which I thought a very shrewd and sensible speech.

CHAPTER V

MY FIRST BATTLE

THE inhabitants of Marsala did not give us a very warm welcome, but the march next day to Salemi smacked of a triumphal procession. The people from the neighbouring districts came in crowds and cheered till they were hoarse. Monks, priests, men, women, and children danced, sang, waved queer-looking banners, and presented us with garlands. They were exactly in their element, and, if shouting could achieve success, the independence of Italy was already assured. They followed us all day on the way to Salemi, where we halted to organise a corps of volunteers. Wild, shaggy fellows they were, dressed in goatskins and armed with flint-muskets and rusty pistols.

The Garibaldians were a ragged set, but they were princes compared with these Sicilian bandits.

"You don't seem in love with our allies," remarked Menotti laughingly, and I shook my head.

"The material's rough," said he, "but we shall soon cut it into shape; and see, we have the Church on our side!"

A man dressed as a priest and carrying a heavy oak staff had pressed up to the General, begging to be enrolled in the army. This was the celebrated Fra Pantaleone, who became a sort of chaplain to the

force, and was always to be seen in the front when the bullets were flying. Having much influence amongst the people, he proved a tower of strength, the simple peasants believing he could not espouse the wrong side, which was fortunate for us.

Whatever the General thought privately of his new recruits he received them very affably, praised their patriotism, declared that such brave fellows must win, and finally handed them over to the care of two officers to be drilled into soldiers.

It was late that night when any of the staff got to sleep, and the next morning found us all hard at work making preparations for the advance to Palermo.

Nino Bixio departed with the first company to feel for the enemy, concerning whom all kinds of stories were brought into camp by the natives. One scout had seen several thousand soldiers marching in hot haste from Marsala; horse, foot, and artillery had set out from Messina; a large force lay hidden among the hills on our route; in fact, according to these gentlemen, armies in Sicily were as thick as blackberries in autumn.

Garibaldi, however, was not to be flurried. We worked steadily all day and about eight o'clock went to bed, having the ground for mattress, the sky for roof, and, speaking personally, a saddle for pillow. However, we slept soundly, and felt aggrieved at being turned out shortly after midnight.

"Message from Bixio," whispered Menotti as we took our places. "He's at a place called Vita, and the enemy are not far off."

"Then we're really in for a fight?"

"And a stiff one. There are three thousand men in a strong position at Calatafimi."

"I hope they won't throw a shell into the midst of our irregulars!"

Menotti laughed. "We're all irregulars more or less," he replied. "Victor Emmanuel's troops look down on my father's volunteers as brigands."

"Well, the Red Shirts know how to fight, if they aren't strong on parades!"

"And these Sicilians will do very well after they've been hardened a bit. Veterans are made, not born."

"Bravo, Menotti, you're a genius!"

Our conversation was abruptly ended by the General sending half-a-dozen of us to ride in advance of the main body. We did not expect to encounter the enemy, but caution is rarely wasted in time of war, and a well-planned ambushade might have annihilated our scanty force. The night was dark, the road rough and hilly, but fortunately we were not molested, and early in the morning joined hands with Bixio.

While the men breakfasted and recruited their strength the staff rode out to reconnoitre.

Calatafimi is situated in the heart of the mountains, where three roads from Palermo, Marsala, and Trapani meet. Above the town and to the south of it is an extremely strong position called Puanto dei Romani, and here, by the aid of our glasses, we distinctly saw the Royals being formed up.

"Warm work presently," remarked Menotti as we turned back to put our troops in order; and I hoped it would not be too warm for our miniature army.

Garibaldi placed his men on a range of hills outside Vita, the Red Shirts in the centre, the Sicilians on the flanks, and the four guns covering the road. There we waited, and those of us who had visited the out-

posts occupied our leisure time in breakfasting—an unsatisfactory performance which consisted in eating a crust of bread and drinking a cup of water. Garibaldi did not believe in luxuries.

The Red Shirts, in the highest spirits, talked confidently of the approaching victory, and a thrill of excitement ran through the ranks when the hostile cavalry were seen preparing to advance. They made a gallant show as they moved forward in a compact body, with the sun shining on their flashing swords. I had never seen a cavalry charge, and I was fascinated.

Down they came, slowly at first, then quickening the pace, the beautiful horses moving together with the precision of a machine. Well in front rode the leader, brandishing his sword as if to urge his men forward. The pace increased, the high-spirited animals raced as if literally flying over the ground. They reached the bottom of the hill, were crossing the road, when—Crash! went the four guns.

The transformation scene was so complete that I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses. The road was strewn with bodies. Here a wounded cavalryman went hobbling back on foot; there, a riderless horse, maddened by pain, dashed screaming through the disordered ranks. Untouched, the leader still rode onward, followed by the shattered regiment. And what a regiment! All order was lost; the men could not close up the great gaps, but each gallant fellow rode straight as he could for our death-dealing artillery.

Again the guns thundered forth their welcome; Bixio's company pushed up in support, poured in a

hot musketry fire, and the valley was draped with a curtain of smoke. Slowly the gray mist cleared away, showing us the handful of survivors in full retreat.

Almost at the same time Garibaldi, bidding us follow, dashed off to the right, where a fierce struggle was going on. The slopes of the hill were covered by black columns of Royalist infantry, who, at the bayonet's point, were trying to force our position. In this they had nearly succeeded. The Sicilians, unable to withstand the charge of trained troops, were wavering and yielding ground, when the cry of "Garibaldi! *Viva Garibaldi!*" restored the fortunes of the day.

Fearlessly the lion-hearted chief flung himself into the thickest of the fight, we following him. Twice we forced the Royals over the brow of the hill, but their numbers were too great. Back they came to renew the struggle hand to hand. Almost at the first moment my horse had been shot; I was fighting on foot in the midst of the crowd. Slowly but surely in our particular corner of the field, we retreated, the Royals pressing us ever more closely. I had lost sight of the General, of Menotti, of everybody. My brain was on fire with the terrible excitement; I tried hard to stand my ground and failed. Back, back, ever back I was pushed with the rest, when suddenly a tremendous shout arose in the rear; there was an irresistible rush, and for the third time the Royals were flung over the hill.

A tricolour flag with a broken staff lay on the ground. Picking it up and waving it above my head I ran down the slope, followed by a handful of men. Together we rushed after the flying enemy. Jumping,

running, sliding, slipping we went, forgetful of the risk till, on the opposite slope, the Royals turned, and, sheltering themselves, opened a smart fire.

Then for the first time realising the stupidity of my behaviour, I prevailed on the gallant fellows with me to return, and we raced back amidst the derisive cheers of the enemy.

Meanwhile the Red Shirts in the centre had received orders to carry the opposite hill at the point of the bayonet, and we reached our own position just in time to see them cross the road in face of a destructive fire.

"They'll never do it!" exclaimed a Sicilian gloomily. "See! the Royals knock them over like rabbits!"

Up they went, dotting the slope with little red patches, ever shifting, swinging from bush to bush, crawling on hands and knees, darting swiftly from right to left in a zigzag path, but always mounting.

Higher and higher they climbed, till almost within bayonet-reach of the foe, when—Puff! puff! puff! the hill was covered with clouds of gray smoke pierced by flashes of fire. Gazing anxiously across the intervening space, I saw that here and there the swift-moving red patches had come to a sudden halt. Some lay flat on the ground, others had rolled till caught by a projecting bush—and each was one of the Thousand!

Still the survivors moved forward and upward, but now the gray clouds became thicker, ran together, lost their individuality, merged in one sullen opaque curtain. In vain I tried to see the grim tragedy that was going on behind it. The lower slopes, however, lay clear and distinct, bathed in brilliant sunlight, and

suddenly, out into the brightness there leaped red forms easily distinguishable. One after another they came from the gloom, some at a swift run, some crawling painfully, but the majority at the regulation step, as if scorning to move more quickly.

A deep groan burst from those around me.

"They're beaten!" cried more than one, in a hopeless tone.

The result was disheartening, and made the situation critical. If the men of the "Thousand" were defeated, what could we expect from the Sicilians with their antiquated weapons and inexperience of fighting?

It was a case of "touch-and-go" with the Liberating Army, as any man with an atom of common sense might see. Quicker and quicker the red figures sprang into the sunlight, now forming a continuous stream. Up above, the gray cloud grew denser, the jets of fire shot through more rapidly, the sharp, quick reports merged into one long roll.

"If they charged," I said aloud, thinking of the enemy, "they could double our fellows up like brown paper."

Every man near me was talking excitedly.

"They're coming down!"

"No, no! They're safer up there! They can shoot us like birds on a string!"

"Not a man can get under cover!"

"Here are our fellows, nearly home."

"They've left a good many behind!"

"Give them a rousing good cheer!"

A tremendous "*Viva!*" rose from the hill, was taken up and repeated by the Sicilians, and the faces of those returning flushed with pleasure. They were hot

and panting, many had lost their hats, the Sicilian sun beat down fiercely on their uncovered heads.

The wounded were carried to the rear; those not altogether disabled kept their places in the ranks.

The battle had begun at ten o'clock in the morning. It was now an hour past noon, though it seemed to me we had been fighting for a week.

The Chief received the baffled stormers with that wonderful smile which linked men's hearts with his.

"Good lads!" said he. "Bravely done! Next time they will give way."

Not a shadow of doubt or mistrust marked his face. Calmly confident he stood, believing that the "Thousand" could not be beaten. His boys rarely failed him in the time of need; they would not now.

We watched his eager glance at the strong position opposite; by some means the enemy must be turned out. Soon the orders were issued. Bixio, who from the first had been in the thickest of the fight, led his company to the attack; others moved up in support. To the right and left detachments were sent to create a diversion. My heart beat fast as I watched the advance. Down the slope they went, and across the road in comparative safety; then the climb began. At first the most beautiful order was preserved, each body regulating its speed by that of its neighbour; but this lasted only a short time.

Secure on the height and well sheltered, the Royals poured in a withering fire, which could be returned only at a great disadvantage. Occasionally our men stopped, lay down, discharged their rifles, and then running forward swiftly secured a bit of cover. But

the whole game was a deadly one. Our spirits sank as we saw how, after every advance, the numbers lessened, and noticed the little clusters of red lying motionless on the ground.

Still the survivors pressed on, running, lying down to fire, then springing to their feet, advancing with a fierce rush. Up and up they went, their course marked by a long red trail. Some, grievously wounded, returned slowly; others, though manifestly hit, continued to climb, staggering dizzily from side to side. Breathlessly we waited and watched. Could they do it? Another twenty yards were covered, and we broke into tumultuous cheering as they began to get within hands' grip of the foe.

With his keen glance Garibaldi scanned every phase of the fight, and now a second body of men dashed with a cheer up the lower slopes. Forward they went, their encouraging cries telling their harassed comrades of coming help, while every man who looked on drew a deep breath of relief. The victory was ours! We cheered again and again exultingly. The order passed to right and left to prepare for dealing the crushing blow.

Suddenly, as if propelled by an invisible force, the Royals flung themselves on our exhausted flank, broke it by an irresistible rush, and sent the Red Shirts flying down the slope. Back they came pell-mell with the gleaming bayonets close behind.

So sharp, so sudden, so decisive was the overthrow, that the supports, though wavering only the smallest fraction of a minute, were lost. The living tide swept down upon them, dashed through their ranks, cast them aside like broken chips, and leaped impetuously

across the road. All together the disorganised mass crested the slope, while at the same time another column, hitherto unnoticed, hurled itself against our right wing.

The fight again became a fight of individuals. Flushed with success, the Royals drove the beaten stormers into our midst. Letting them through, we closed up and presented a united front to the foe. Little firing took place, bayonet crossed bayonet, sword rang on sword. We were holding our own but no more, when a great cry of triumph on our right proclaimed that our flank was pierced.

Instantly the grand old Chief made for the point of danger, and we of the staff went with him. It was absolutely necessary to fill the gap and keep the enemy in check till the reserves arrived. The danger was frightful, but not a man of the little band faltered. With a rousing cheer we threw ourselves into the breach, and in the foremost place waved the black banner with the fiery Vesuvius in the centre. No more fitting emblem could have appeared that day on the heights before Calatafimi.

Sciaffino, the standard-bearer, guarded the precious burden—it was to cost him his life before the battle ended—and every Red Shirt struggled to get near it. I found myself beside Menotti and his father, in a crowd of battling men. The General fought like one possessed, for on our stand that day depended the fate of Italy. Defeat would not mean simply falling back, but total annihilation. We must win or die; there was no third course. I had understood that the Neapolitans could not fight; they undeceived me at Calatafimi. Again and again they pressed fiercely to

the attack, as if determined to force a passage through our ranks. Elsewhere, I believe, the line was broken, but we managed to hold firm till, at the critical moment, the sound of cheering announced the coming of the reserves.

We were saved, and only just in time. The fresh troops, coming on at the double, crashed into the ranks of our opponents, who wavered, gave way, failed to reform, and slowly retired. Menotti grasped my hand.

"Well done!" said he. "You're better at a fight than digging a garden."

The reserves had saved us from annihilation, but they had not secured victory. In well-maintained order the enemy withdrew to their own position, and we could not follow. Many of our best and bravest had fallen in the field; the ammunition was well-nigh exhausted; the Royals still outnumbered us by four to one; retreat looked inevitable. For hours we had fought beneath the fiery Sicilian sun. All who were not wounded were worn out with the struggle.

Garibaldi stood in deep thought, gazing across the hill. The wearied troops, glad of a brief respite, had dropped on the ground.

The situation seemed hopeless to me, and I was not surprised when Bixio, than whom no man that day had exposed his life more recklessly, whispered, "I fear we must retreat, General."

The Chief started as if shot, then, looking at his gallant subordinate, he exclaimed, "No, no, Bixio; that is impossible! Here we must die!"

The simple though expressive words electrified every one who heard them. With such a leader we felt that ultimate victory was certain.

Hearing the hum of applause the volunteers strained their ears to catch what was said, and the General walked towards them.

"My sons," cried he, "I desire of you one last desperate charge. Five minutes' rest, and then—forward!"

An enthusiastic cheer greeted this speech, and we all sat down to rest. Desperate the charge was bound to be, and, should it be repulsed, it would be our last. We all felt this, but no one spoke the words. Wondering in a dreamy way how many of us would find a death-bed on that fatal hill, I lay waiting for the signal. Near me sat a youth lazily nursing his knees and laughing with a comrade. Menotti, who seemed fatigue-proof, stood just in front beside his father. Presently the Chief turned towards us, his eyes flashing, and every muscle of his face quivering with excitement.

"Now!" cried he. "To the bayonet!"

→Instantly the ridge was alive with shouting men. Fatigue was forgotten, danger unheeded; the hot sun had lost its power. Every man who could crawl pressed eagerly into the ranks, and we moved forward to the cry of "*Alla baionetta! Viva l'Italia! Viva Garibaldi!*"

Like reckless gamblers, we were staking everything on one cast of the die. Hot, dirty, ragged, altogether disreputable-looking, but resolved to conquer or die, we went our way with the famous fighting-standard waving before us in the sunlight.

Up the slope, thickly dotted by those who had already fallen, we dashed in the teeth of a fire that could not be returned, as our ammunition was gone.

The sword and the bayonet alone could aid us, if by good luck we should reach the top. With many, alas, the struggle quickly ended. Grape and musketry thinned our ranks; I saw the standard fall, but was too far off to seize it; the youngster who, ten minutes before, sat laughing on the opposite hill, fell at my feet pierced through the heart.

The Royals blazed away fiercely, and some, whose cartridge-cases were empty, hurled great stones which came leaping and crashing down the mountain-side, striking men and rolling them maimed and battered to the bottom!

Waving his sword and crying "Forward!" Menotti urged the troops on. His father was in front, and not a volunteer but would have given his life many times over to strike a blow beside his great leader. Nearer and nearer we approached the foe till almost at bayonet point, when, cheering wildly, we dashed at them. Menotti went down with a bullet in his shoulder, but the next instant was on his feet amidst the applause of his comrades. A Royal struck at him savagely, but I parried the blow with my sword.

"Thanks," he gasped, "I'll not forget!" and then we were in the thick of it, cutting, thrusting, parrying, striking like demons.

The Royals stood at bay giving blow for blow, and many brave men on both sides bit the dust in that last encounter.

Several of the Neapolitan officers strained every nerve to drive us back, exposing their lives freely and calling on their men for another effort.

To our right and left the strife raged with equal fierceness, but we were gradually gaining the upper

hand. Fighting stubbornly the Royals fell back from point to point, and what they once lost we kept. At length they were driven to the wide plain on the summit, when the well-known voice of our leader was heard crying, "Forward, my sons!"

Forward it was. With a vigorous cheer we went at them, and in five minutes they were flying for their lives—broken and routed. The battle was won. Calatafimi was ours. We had struck a blow which would go far towards the independence of Italy.

CHAPTER VI

PATSY

THE "Thousand" had paid a heavy price for Calatafimi, many familiar faces being missing when we camped that night in the little town.

Before my visit to Quarto I had known none of these men; now I felt their loss as keenly as that of old friends. We had voyaged and marched together, stood shoulder to shoulder under the leaden hail; had kept step up the death-swept slope; had rushed on the foe with the same enthusiastic cheer; yet one was taken, the other left!

"Luigi? Ah, yes; in hospital, signor. Lost his right arm; his soldiering days are over, but there, he's done something for Italy!"

"Giorgio? The little fair-haired chap who played the flute? We buried him on the top of the hill where the fight took place. The flute? It's buried with him."

The men were proud of their hard-won victory, but that first evening at least their thoughts centred most on the comrades who had fallen out of the ranks for evermore.

After spending an hour with Menotti, who was in the surgeon's hands, I gladly lay down to rest.

"Howard!" I awakened with a start to find the

General bending over me. He was dressed in the everlasting gray trousers, red shirt, and old felt hat. A revolver peeped from his waist-belt, and he had tied a handkerchief loosely round his throat, as the morning air blew keen.

"Get up, my son," he said kindly, "we're going to move, and I have some work for you to do."

I sprang to my feet, all eagerness to listen.

"You do not know Rosalino Pilo? That is a pity; he is a fine patriot. Italy has produced no nobler. He has been in exile many years and knows your London well. He was one of the moving spirits in this business, taking the post of danger, as he always does. He acted as our pioneer, and stirred up an insurrection in Palermo before we left Genoa. Unfortunately the people were not ready, and the affair failed. Pilo escaped to the mountains and is still there in hiding. Some men have come in who know his place of refuge. They will guide you to him. Take this letter; it explains my plans. Should you be forced to destroy it, tell him to meet me at Monreale. Now get some breakfast; the guides are ready."

I saluted, secured the note, and, as the General walked away, indulged in a quiet laugh.

"Get some breakfast" was easier said than done. However, after considerable foraging I managed to secure a tolerable meal, and then sought my guides. There were three of them, all "good men and true," the General had said, but certainly a more villainous-looking trio I had rarely seen. Picturesque, perhaps, in their goatskins ornamented by great horse-pistols like baby cannon, and broad, sharp butchers' knives;

but dirty and unwashed. They might have been brothers, there was such a striking similarity in their scowling faces, beetling brows, and black flashing eyes, and I thought with admiring regret of my old acquaintance, Francesco Poli, the Neapolitan Camorrist.

Still, as the Chief vouched for their honesty, there was nothing to be said, and we set off. At first I tried to talk to them, but that failed dismally. They were by no means loquacious, and even when they did speak I could understand very little of their *patois*. Thus, driven back on myself, my thoughts turned to my guardian, shut up in his dreary prison, and I wondered if I had done right in coming to Sicily. Away from Naples the difficulty of rescuing him did not seem so very formidable, yet Garibaldi had declared it impossible; the Camorrist had told me plainly I should lose my life; Carlo, going a step further, had hinted that I should endanger my guardian's life as well. Besides, Giovanni was in Naples, and he would move heaven and earth to drag his fellow-conspirator from the clutches of the Bourbon king. Should he fail, there was some comfort from the fact that, after Calatafimi, Garibaldi's enterprise would succeed. Suddenly my thoughts were rudely interrupted by one of the guides clapping a hand over my mouth and dragging me behind a huge boulder. In an instant I had whipped out my revolver, but, on seeing the positions taken by the other two, I felt no treachery was intended, at least for the present. They were lying flat on the ground with their old muskets ready to fire, and we joined them. Peering cautiously round the edge of the boulder, I observed a body of soldiers marching

leisurely towards Calatafimi. They were Neapolitans, numbering about a score, and apparently on good terms with themselves. Two officers rode in front; the men, following in loose order, laughed and joked happily.

"A scouting party," I murmured, "but a very careless one."

We lay quite still till they had passed out of sight, and then made off in the opposite direction. My bandits were anxious to be gone; it was clear they had no wish for a nearer interview with the regular troops.

"Come," I thought, "Garibaldi was right in calling them 'good men and true!'"

By the aid of a little Italian and many gesticulations they gave me to understand that we must be very cautious, as various bodies of troops were prowling about the mountains. Accordingly we proceeded with the utmost care, two of us marching before, two behind. The fellow with me was the least objectionable and most intelligent of the three, and had we been better able to understand each other, no doubt we should have got on very well. We slept that night in a clump of bushes, starting again early next morning, and by noon had covered a considerable distance, though, judging by appearances, we were still tramping up the same hill outside Calatafimi. The guides, however, were quite contented, and when I asked in my best Italian where Rosalino was, they waved their arms expansively, and broke into a chorus of song.

Towards evening we had another fright. A second party of soldiers approached us, and we had barely time to throw ourselves on the ground behind some

bushes. These fellows, too, seemed merry, as they cracked jokes loudly in passing our hiding-place. I was watching them go by in their shambling, careless manner, when an exclamation of astonishment, checked only just in time, rose to my lips. In the midst of the party, guarded by two soldiers, walked a prisoner. His arms were securely bound, and a couple of bayonets were too close to his body to be pleasant. He was young, tall, well set up, with muscular limbs, blue eyes, and long, curly hair. He was naturally fair, but his skin was hidden by dirt. He had no hat, and his head was roughly bandaged with dirty-looking cloth. His feet were bare and bleeding, his trousers in rags, while his coat gaped with huge rents. As a scarecrow he would have been worth money, and have proved a great success. But what first drew my attention to him was the fact of his being English, or rather Irish, for this tatterdemalion was Patrick O'Connor, commonly called Patsy.

I had seen him last in Paris dressed as a gentleman, and, as the saying goes, clean as a new pin, but it was impossible to mistake those frank blue eyes, in spite of dirt and rags and a general air of misery.

Waiting till the soldiers had disappeared, I tried to explain to my companions that we must follow them. They were certain not to go far before encamping for the night, when it was just possible I might be of service to my old friend.

At first my amiable though beetle-browed bandits failed to understand what I wished to do; when the meaning began to dawn on them they looked horror-struck. Two shook their heads most emphatically, intimating that they washed their hands of the whole

affair. The third hovered painfully between a wish to please me and fear of the troops. Seeing that I intended going, he made up his mind to accompany me, and we set off, leaving the others gaping after us. After a time, however, they followed, though very cautiously and afar off.

The Royals marched carelessly, doubtless feeling quite safe from attack, and on this over-confidence I built my hopes. An hour's walking brought us to the top of the hill, a fairly wide plain covered with furze and short spiry grass. To my great delight the soldiers stopped in the centre, evidently for the purpose of passing the night. The officer posted three or four sentries, the others lit a fire, produced food and drink, and settled down comfortably. Patsy, I noticed, had a share of the supper, and then, his arms being refastened, was permitted to lie down beside a bush. All this I watched from behind a clump of furze, noting my friend's exact position, the places of the sentries, and the nature of the ground. The faithful Sicilian crouched by my side; his companions had vanished. I laughed rather contemptuously at their timidity, yet after events proved they were not destitute of courage, or of a certain cleverness.

Gradually the noises of the bivouac ceased; wrapping themselves up, the soldiers settled down to sleep; the fire burned low; the gray of the evening gave place to the darkness of night. Our cramped position among the furze was not particularly pleasant, while the air blew keen; but I resolved on waiting patiently, and on making no move till after the changing of the sentries. Even they did not await the relief more anxiously than I did. After that I stayed nearly an

hour longer, and then nudged my companion, whispering it was time to move. We crept forward slowly on hands and knees, the spiky thorns piercing our clothes, lacerating our flesh, and making the journey anything but comfortable.

Under different circumstances the pain would have produced vigorous language; as it was I had to grin and bear it in silence, thus learning a valuable lesson in self-restraint. Protected by his goatskin, the Sicilian suffered far less, and it was evident from his easy gliding motion that this was not his first experience in the art of walking on all-fours. Before the night ended I felt quite glad that the amiable bandit was a patriot.

The first part of the journey was only painful; it was in passing the sentry that the danger lay. We approached near enough to see him resting on his gun, and peering thoughtfully into the gloom. Once past him, I had little fear of the result; but how to get by?

The Sicilian solved the problem. Leaving me behind, he crawled forward, and his snake-like motions afforded ample proof of his dexterity in the manoeuvre. I began to acquire a decided respect for him, and to wonder if the Red Indians had ever lived in Sicily. Wooten-Gunga and all those fellows with the long names were novices compared with my Sicilian.

Suddenly pausing, he lay flat on the ground and deliberately broke a twig. The sentinel started, clutched his rifle, and looked round in nervous apprehension. The bandit had disappeared—gone through the earth, I conjectured—but the explanation was more simple than this, he had merely squeezed himself into

a tiny hollow. Pulling himself together, the sentry shook off his nervousness, but the hidden watcher had not finished with him. The twigs seemed to be alive, they snapped here and there, occasionally almost under the sentry's feet, till the poor fellow must have been cold with fright.

Then came a noise like the scratching of an animal, faint at first but gradually louder, and proceeding from the spot where the Sicilian lay concealed. The sentry stood undecided for a few moments, then, impelled alike by dread and curiosity, he moved to the place, poking the furze with his gun. Of course I saw all this only in the dimmest outline, while the climax of the performance was over before I comprehended that it had begun.

It was a sort of Jack-in-the-box arrangement. A second dusky figure popped up, the first popped down. There was no fuss, no outcry, no bungling at all, only a new method of relieving sentries. The Sicilian was decidedly a man of approved business style.

Moving swiftly to the spot I found the sentry lying on his back with a home-made gag in his mouth, and the butt-end of his own rifle resting on his chest. Mentally, I fear, he was shaken, physically he would soon be little the worse for his new experience.

Leaving the guide, and having borrowed his keen-edged knife, I made my way without hindrance to the bush near which Patsy lay. The great point was to prevent him from uttering an expression of astonishment, which would disturb the sleepers lying near. Fortunately he had the reputation of being a remarkably cool fellow, whose nerves were always in splendid order, so that I had not much to fear.

Gathering a handful of earth, I flung it gently on his upturned face—it could not make him any dirtier. The prisoner, forgetful of his bonds, tried to raise his arm, and of course failed. Then he turned mechanically on his side; but a second dose of Sicilian gravel made him sit up. Wondering if he were sufficiently aroused, I whispered cautiously, "Hist, Patsy! If you're awake, don't make a noise!" The response showed how superfluous my caution had been.

"What if I'm asleep?" asked Patsy softly.

Clearly this Philistine would make a poor patron for the patent-medicine vendors.

Smothering my disgust at his unimaginative nature, I slipped to his side and began cutting through the cords which bound him. Lying quite still till I had finished, he crept behind me to the bush, and we had almost reached the further side of it when a warning cry rang out.

"Treachery! Treachery! The prisoner's escaping! Turn out! Turn out!"

Instantly the uproar was tremendous. The men sprang to their feet, seized their weapons, and hastily joined their officers. Everything was in confusion; some of the soldiers shouted at the top of their voices; the sentries came hurrying in; one genius heaped fresh fuel on the dying fire to make a blaze, which would have been extremely useful to an enemy.

I was for bolting incontinently, but Patsy seized my arm, whispering, "They can't see us; if we run we're done for."

Suddenly a shot came from our left; evidently my guide was getting uneasy. The confusion now became ludicrous. Every man put himself in the light,

where he could be most easily hit. As if the first shot had been a signal, two others now came from the opposite side and were followed by an unearthly howl. My friend woke up to the situation.

"Jimmy," he exclaimed, "you're a great general, entirely!"

I'm afraid I never found an opportunity to explain that the diversion was not caused by my orders, though I easily guessed what had happened.

My two recreant guides, not caring to desert me altogether, had hung about the camp, and, hearing the noise, had done what they could to draw off attention. Their interference in the serenade proved effectual, nor could the Royals be blamed for being timid. There might be something familiar in the whizzing of the shots, but not in those blood-curdling Sicilian yells.

In the excitement several men began firing wildly, but the officers, recovering from their stupor, headed a rush towards the spot whence the shots came. At the same time Patsy and I ran in the opposite direction, picking up the third guide on our way. A scattering volley showed me we were discovered, and a party of soldiers instantly gave chase. Our Sicilian led the way, clearing with remarkable agility every obstacle. Patsy, being bare-footed, must have suffered tortures; indeed his feet were frightfully gashed, but he made no complaint, running beside me quite cheerfully. Crossing the plain we began the descent of the rocky hill on the other side, when our guide, saying we could find shelter, led us to a group of boulders. We heard the Royals bawling and shouting at the top, but they did not descend, and presently came the signal of recall.

"Listen to that!" I said delightedly. "Now we shall be safe; they're going back."

"But not to sleep!"

"No; they'll be wide awake enough the rest of the night. But how came you to be with them?"

"A fair question and soon answered. They took a fancy to my society and wouldn't let me go. The captain said he'd stick to me closer than a brother."

"But what were you at?"

"Admiring the scenery, my boy; watching the purple glow on the mountain-tops at sunrise, and that sort of thing. Gathering materials for a painting, to be hung at the Royal Academy. But these Bourbons have no sympathy with a struggling artist! They said I was trespassing on the grounds of a gentleman named Francis of Naples. They further said an artist should travel with a passport, wear shoes, provide himself with a decent suit of clothes, and carry the implements of his craft. Those fellows have no soul for art!"

"They seem to have a fair scent for a conspirator!"

"Sharp boy, Jimmy," said my old chum, laughing. "And you? I can't distinguish our estimable friend there very clearly, but he seems to have most of the makings of a bandit about him. Thrown in your lot with him? Am I held to ransom? Or perhaps you've developed a love for scenery of indescribable grandeur; a rabid desire to watch the sunlight shimmering in an intense purple; or to feast your eyes——"

"If you don't stop that bosh I'll topple you over the rock and you can admire the scenery from the bottom. My being here is easily accounted for: I am simply carrying a letter from one gentleman to another."

"Ah, turned courier! That's your livery, I suppose: I shall see it better when the day breaks. It looks very well in the gloom—neat and not gaudy, and goes well with the uniform of our friend there. What is he?"

"My guide."

"Oh yes, I forgot. He's taking you to the gentleman's estate. Does he live in the neighbourhood?"

"Who?"

"The gentleman."

"That's rather a puzzle. I can't say he has a home at present, unless it's a hole in a rock."

"Awkward for the postal authorities. Has he any name?"

"Yes, Rosalino Pilo."

"Good; and the other's Garibaldi? Then we're all in the same boat, which, as far as I'm concerned, is a very leaky one. But I'll tell you about it, and you'll see how much I owe you. 'Twould have been a short shrift for Patsy O'Connor but for you and your wonderful chorus-singers. There's no need to heap up the gratitude and that sort of thing between you and me; that's all right for acquaintances, but old friends feel too strongly to say much."

Gripping his hand, I said, "All right, Patsy, I know, fire away."

He had scarcely begun when the mournful cry of a night-bird floated up the valley, and, at intervals, was twice repeated. Jumping to his feet, our guide made a similar sound so naturally that we almost expected to hear the flapping of the bird's wings. This was at once answered, the cry approaching nearer and nearer, and presently the native called out some words in his to us unintelligible *patois*.

"Here come your chorus-singers," observed Patsy, laughing, and the next instant my two guides came up. We spent the next half-hour each complimenting the other on his splendid bravery, and, as the Sicilians all talked together in their broad dialect, while Patsy put on the very richest brogue in honour of the occasion, the fun may easily be conceived.

At last, however, we cooled down, and as no one but my chum had slept for some considerable time, it was arranged that he should keep watch while the rest took a short nap.

I should have liked to hear his story, but my eyes were heavy, so, selecting a sheltered spot between two rocks, I curled myself up and was soon in the land of Nod.

CHAPTER VII

A TRUE PATRIOT

"GET up, Rip Van Winkle! You've been snoring like an amateur earthquake, frightening these poor chaps almost to death. They thought the rocks were caving in."

Rubbing my eyes drowsily, I glanced round. The sun was shining brightly, too brightly for comfort; the guides had spread out their scanty store of food, consisting of coarse black bread, cheese that would have battered down a fortress, and the fragrant onion; while Patsy looked on in approval, his dirty merry face all smiles.

The breakfast was not exactly a banquet, but hunger prevented us from grumbling with the food. Having gathered up the fragments—and they were not many—we made ready for a start.

Patsy's feet were in an awful state, and I made the natives comprehend that our first business was to find a mountain stream. We proceeded cautiously at first, keeping a smart look-out for the discomfited soldiers, of whom, however, we saw no trace.

"Cleared out," said Patsy, deftly avoiding a sharp stone, "and glad to get off with whole skins. They'll have a pretty story to tell at Palermo!"

Working our way down the valley, we reached a

running brook whose waters looked so clear, so fresh, and so invitingly cool that neither of us could resist the temptation of a bath. Setting the guides, who thought water was made for drinking purposes only, to watch for the enemy, we stripped and plunged in.

Patsy declared he felt like a new man, and, by the time we clambered on to the bank, he certainly looked it.

"Pity we haven't a spare pair of boots," I said.

"I couldn't wear them just at present, if we had."

However, between us we bandaged the wounded feet and rejoined our companions, who seemed to think we were suffering from an attack of incipient madness.

"Now," said I, "take us to Rosalino Pilo as soon as you like."

Without Patsy the journey would have been dreadfully tedious. The scenery was grand enough, but there was such a lot of it, and continually climbing one side of a rocky hill and going down the other became a trifle monotonous. Besides, each rugged mountain-path might be barred by Bourbon soldiers, and though this contingency added to the excitement, it distracted one's attention from the beauties of nature.

Two of the guides went ahead, one dropped to the rear, and I walked with Patsy, listening to his yarn and keeping a sharp look-out for the soldiers.

"You don't know Pilo?" he began. "He is a splendid chap. A Sicilian of good family and a thorough-going patriot. A leader in the revolution of '49, and mixed up with one or two others. I met him in London, and came out to Palermo in charge of stores subscribed by friends of the cause."

"You seem to have had a good time of it!"

"Fine!" said Patsy. "Healthy business engineering a revolution, and exciting, though the excitement's a little overdone at times."

"How did you manage to come to grief?"

"Ask me another. The works went wrong somehow. We couldn't hook Garibaldi for one thing. People didn't see any chance of winning, so they stood off, and very prudent of 'em too! The leaders quarrelled, government got to know all about it, soldiers came down, and the whole thing fizzled out."

"And you?"

"Skipped to the mountains with Pilo. It's a pleasant life on the mountains; fine views, bracing air, healthy appetite, change of scenery, and all that kind of thing."

"But there are drawbacks?"

"Just a few. Hotels are scarce; tailors and boot-makers at a premium. There's rather too long an interval between meals, and an absence of soap, but plenty of music to lull one to sleep. The soldiers have been very kind that way, giving us a musketry serenade most nights. We had a little surprise the other evening which caused mischief. I missed Pilo in the confusion and had to go touring on my own account. I fell in with the Royals, who very kindly offered to show me the way to Palermo. I couldn't hurt their feelings by refusing, you know."

I learned afterwards that in the attack alluded to, Patsy had stayed behind to assist a wounded man who had died in his arms; but of this he said nothing.

"There you are. That's the story. Nothing could be simpler," he concluded. "Now tell me how you

came to put on the red shirt, and what has become of Mr. Carter."

"The one explains the other," I answered, "but it's rather a long yarn."

"So much the better; it will help to while away the time. It looks as if these chaps think they'll be paid by the mile, and intend taking us round the island."

"Don't you know where we are?"

"No more than the man in the moon. It's all alike to me. Sometimes we go up, sometimes down, and the stones are sharp all the way. But get on with the yarn."

I began at the arrest of my guardian, described the interview with Garibaldi, the errand to Quarto—touching lightly on the episode of the Countess, the trip to Marsala, the fight at Calatafimi, and my mission to Pilo.

Patsy listened with quiet attention to it all.

"Poor Mr. Carter's in an awful scrape," he said, 'but they won't put him to death. Being a British subject, there would be a fuss; but they'll keep him in prison. The monotony and small rations will tell on his health, I'm afraid."

I asked him if I ought to have returned to Naples.

"Not a bit of good," replied he. "You'd have been snapped up first day and given the police a handle. Besides, this Giovanni can do a lot more than you; perhaps manage to set your guardian free. Anyway, Garibaldi's sure to be successful, and there will be a clean sweep of the dungeons. Smart dodge that of the Countess; but for your friend Carlo you'd have been

floored. He's a plucky fellow, and I hope he hasn't lost his head over the business."

"He seemed to be pretty confident."

"He's well in with the Chief, perhaps; but I say, Jimmy, you don't touch high-water mark as a conspirator!"

"No," I answered, laughing; "you bear the palm there."

"Or the dirt it grew in!" exclaimed he, looking at his clothes. "But I'm an aristocrat compared with the others. Wait till you see Pilo and his crew!"

"If they're worse than you they *must* be scarecrows!" I remarked, with emphasis.

We rested in the middle of the day, ate the scraps, had a drink of water, and trudged on again, till towards evening we found ourselves on the flat tree-covered summit of a steep hill.

The guides stopped, and Patsy, recognising the spot, exclaimed with great joy, "This is one of Pilo's hiding-places! Come on, I'll show you the way."

We struck into the wood in single file—Patsy leading, when suddenly a harsh voice commanded us to halt, and we saw a man with levelled gun peering at us from behind a tree. Patsy continued to advance, calling out cheerfully, "All right, my friend, you can put down that shooting-iron, there isn't any powder in it!"

Recognising the speaker, the sentry gave a howl of satisfaction, and the news soon spread through the camp of the outlaws that the Englishman had returned.

Pilo's men had lit a fire in an open space and were crowding round it, as the evening had turned in chilly. They were certainly not a reassuring-looking crowd; my three guides were princes in comparison. Dirt,

hunger, privation, exposure, and wounds had played havoc with them. Starvation was plainly written on their gaunt, emaciated, sharp-featured faces. Counting their ribs would have been easy. No one indulged in the luxury of boots and stockings, a few had queer-looking caps, while no self-respecting beggar would have taken their ragged garments as a gift.

Pilo warmly congratulated Patsy on his escape, and eagerly opened Garibaldi's letter. He was a fine-looking fellow, with a frank but rather sad face, and I could easily understand my chum's admiration for him.

After thanking me for bringing the note he inquired about the expedition, concerning which he could not be told too much. He asked the number of our men, the amount of ammunition, whether the islanders had risen in our favour, betraying keen interest in the account of the fight at Calatafimi.

"Garibaldi is a marvellous leader," said he at the finish, "the people worship him; all will go well in his hands. At last, at last we see the birth of Sicilian independence! After many weary years of waiting the plant is bursting into bloom. So our Chief is marching on Monreale, and wishes us to join him? We must start at once. Rosalino Pilo must not be absent when the patriots enter Palermo."

"Why not wait till the morning?" asked Patsy. "The men aren't in condition for a forced march. Let them have a night's rest. Besides, we don't want to be at Monreale before Garibaldi. Who would supply us with ammunition?"

Pilo admitted the justice of the objection, agreeing to defer the start till daybreak. Meanwhile the men were told of Garibaldi's landing and brilliant victory,

and the news put fresh heart into them. Hope returned to their faces, and they chatted together quite cheerfully of the future.

Pilo lay down by the fire and requested us to join him.

"The fire gives out a good heat," remarked Patsy, holding his hands to the flames. "'Twould be splendid for cooking!"

Pilo smiled.

"But perhaps," continued my chum thoughtfully, "it's a fast-day?"

"It is," replied the leader.

"Ah, I thought so. Pity, too. We might have had a good supper."

"In its turn," Pilo said. "There's this morning's breakfast to come first. Did the soldiers give you anything to eat?"

"Oh, I've been faring like a prince. I only hope this continual junketing won't make me put on flesh."

"What a priceless treasure is youth, with its good spirits!" observed Pilo. "How many brave lads I knew in the old days who laughed and jested at misfortune as you do. Nothing ever sobered them: they came up smiling after each defeat, joked in their prison cells, and met death itself with a smile on their lips. Bright young lives hopelessly wrecked, trodden under foot by the tyranny of their fellow-men! But the sacrifice has borne fruit, and the children of to-day will grow up to call their names blessed."

Presently Patsy induced Pilo to tell us something of his early life, of the terrible struggles against Ferdinand of Naples, who acquired the nickname of

"Bomba" by his bombardment of Messina during the insurrection, of the various expeditions to stir up the people, and of their disastrous results. Pilo was a good *raconteur*, holding us spell-bound while he talked of these things and of the grievous fate that had befallen so many of his companions. If a fraction of what he said was true, it was high time that the Bourbons were cleared out of Sicily and Naples. Towards midnight he and Patsy went the rounds, while I dropped off to sleep, and spent the night in dreaming of dungeons and chains and cruel executions. The time, however, was short, as Pilo roused the camp at daybreak, and, having nothing to delay us in the way of breakfast, we made an immediate start.

My three guides went ahead scouting; I walked with Patsy and the leader, the rest following. Knowing how soundly the enemy had been beaten, I did not think they would make a further stand in the open. However, as the unlikely frequently happens, especially in time of war, we took every precaution against surprise, though what our band of famishing men could have done in case of attack I really do not know.

From time to time Pilo went amongst his followers, cheering and encouraging them. Poor fellows! they sadly needed comfort of some sort as they staggered unsteadily along. But Pilo's presence, his voice full of sympathy, the magnetism of his flashing eyes, gave temporary strength and renewed hope. There was really something marvellous in hearing this man confidently unfold such a glorious future before his band of ragamuffins. They might not, probably would not, see the splendid result, but their descendants would.

Sicily free, the Bourbons turned out of Naples, the Austrians from Venice, the French from Rome, Italy a kingdom, taking its place among the great powers of the earth: wise and humane laws, no more grinding taxes, and all to be brought about by their heroism!

"Splendid chap, Pilo!" Patsy observed; "a bit visionary and that sort of thing, but means every word he says; and so dreadfully in earnest!"

There could be no mistake as to his earnestness. His voice, speech, action, the light in his eyes, every gesture he made, showed it; and this, I think, it was principally, which gave him such tremendous power over his disreputable-looking band.

We marched several hours without a rest, and then had an unexpected treat. The few country people we met on the way said the Royals were falling back on Monreale, where they intended to make a stand. This, of course, simplified our march, and Pilo, no longer afraid of ambuscades, sent out foragers to procure food from the peasants. Thus it was that about nine o'clock we sat down to a better breakfast than I had eaten since leaving Genoa. Roast kid, milk, cheese, and bread formed part of the delicacies which disappeared with the rapidity of lightning. An hour's rest followed, when we again started, feeling different beings.

"Now," exclaimed Patsy as we trudged along, "if we'd only some ammunition there'd be no need to fear the enemy."

The information gained from the peasants turned out to be correct, and we pursued our tedious journey unmolested, arriving at the appointed rendezvous—the high tableland of Renda—early in the evening.

Garibaldi was already there, and it was touching to see the meeting between the two chiefs. Nor did the Red Shirts fail to cheer the half-starved, footsore, hunted band, that had kept the flag of insurrection unfurled on the mountains. They freely shared their own scanty rations, praising the new-comers for their devoted bravery.

Pilo's face beamed with delight at this treatment of his suffering men, and more than once spoke his satisfaction. As for me, I was supremely happy. Garibaldi had laid his hand caressingly on my shoulder, and called me a brave lad. What greater praise, what more striking reward could I wish? Of course I introduced Patsy, who received his share of the General's approbation, and then we went to lie down for the night.

"I don't think much of your army," said my chum. "A decent leader with a few guns could blow you all away in an hour."

"Wait till you see them fight! They'd as soon storm a battery as eat chestnuts."

"Or onions! But that's all rubbish, Jimmy. Batteries aren't stormed so easily now-a-days, and before long the fashion will go out altogether."

"Go on, my boy. You're interesting, if a trifle ridiculous."

"In advance of the age, that's all," replied Patsy, laughing; "most great men are; anyhow, that's my idea. Half-a-dozen cannon loaded with grape would be a match for a lot of bravery."

"Well, go to sleep; perhaps we shall be trying the experiment to-morrow."

"That's the worst of Garibaldi; he takes no notice of the rules of the game."

"Never mind; he frequently wins, all the same."

"Oh, you're a pagan! Good night. Tuck the clothes in and don't tumble out of bed; you might hurt yourself."

Next morning after breakfast, the General, leaving part of his force on the tableland, moved towards Monreale to ascertain if the enemy held the position. Patsy, of course, accompanied Pilo and the Sicilians, while I took my place behind Garibaldi. We pushed on cautiously, since our knowledge of the enemy's numbers and whereabouts was very meagre. Some thought we should meet with no opposition till reaching Monreale; others suggested the Royals had fallen back to Palermo, but both opinions were beside the mark.

Suddenly, sounds of rifle-firing and various puffs of smoke on the hill in front of us announced that our skirmishers had found the foe. Sending me with a message to Pilo on the left, Garibaldi at once dashed toward the scene of the firing, being promptly followed by his staff. Making my way over the uneven ground as quickly as possible, I caught the Sicilian leader just as he entered a rocky defile, and delivered my message.

The possession of this narrow path was of the utmost importance to Garibaldi, since, if not occupied, the Royals could sweep down into the plain and thus cut him off from his supports. If the Sicilians reached the top they might be trusted to guard it for a time; but was it already in the enemy's hands? Recognising how much depended on the answer to this question, I went with them to see.

His face ablaze with eagerness, Pilo led the way,

Patsy and I bringing on the men. Up we went, over the rough stones and piles of rock, climbing, scrambling, swinging from boulder to boulder, cutting our hands, ripping our tattered clothes, but getting ever nearer to the summit.

Suddenly into the midst of us poured a volley of musketry; the soldiers were holding the neck of the path! For one brief moment, but for one moment only, we hesitated; then Pilo's voice rang out clear and strong, and with a wild cheer we sprang forward. There was no stopping to fire, there could be none, the regulars being snugly hidden. The bayonet, and the bayonet alone, could do the work.

"Forward!" was the cry of command, and "Forward!" echoed every man in the little detachment. In spite of Patsy's dictum, enthusiasm still counted for something, and we were in a tight corner. The bullets sped faster and faster, stones came crashing down from the heights, men began to fall.

Still unchecked we rushed on, Pilo leading the way. Very noble he looked as he headed that wild charge. His cap had gone, his long hair floated in the breeze, an air of chivalrous ardour was stamped on his striking features; he appeared what he really was—a leader of men.

Nearer and nearer we approached the summit; another burst would land us at the goal, when suddenly the gallant chief fell with a convulsive shudder.

The Sicilians who saw what had happened stopped; a wail of grief rose on the air—a cry that came straight from the hearts of strong men. Pilo was dead—Pilo, their leader, their father, their friend! Unheeding the storm of bullets they clustered round

the motionless body, while the Royals, cheering loudly, redoubled their fire.

Patsy roused the natives to a fresh effort; I had rarely known him show such emotion. His face was deathly white; the smile had faded from his lips, the light from his eyes. Stooping, he raised the fallen man's sword, crying, "My lads, avenge your leader!"

In response, an ominous shout went floating up the defile, and with a wild rush the Sicilians dashed at the hidden foe. Firing a last volley at the critical moment, the Royals rushed out with the bayonet, but Pilo's death had given his men the victory. Burning to avenge him they did not await the attack, but sped on like men demented. For five minutes the struggle at this spot surpassed in fierceness the most desperate fighting at Calatafimi.

Neither Royals nor Sicilians dreamed of asking or offering quarter. Bayonet crossed bayonet, and woe to the less skilful wielder! Only once were we in danger of being thrust back, and then the cry of "Remember Pilo!" sent every man headlong at the foe. The Royals could no longer stand their ground; they steadily gave way, every foot being instantly occupied.

Just in time we cleared the neck of the pass, sending the regulars flying down the hill into the arms of their reinforcements. Patsy took in the situation at a glance.

"Run, Jimmy," cried he, "run for your life! Tell the General what you have seen. We'll hold on here till we fall, but that won't be long. Reinforcements or an order to retire—one of the two."

In answer, I flung away my sword and fled. Happily

I had received no hurt in the fierce fray to weaken me, for I needed all my strength. Down I went, past the track of dead and wounded men, grieving much that I could not stay to render aid, but time was precious. The loose stones clattered into the valley, strange noises sounded in my ears, but I ran on, and, emerging from the defile, uttered a cry of joy. A body of Red Shirts coming up at the double!

Flinging myself across their path, I called for their leader, and rapidly explained the situation. Would he send help? I had not recognised him, but his voice told me it was the veteran Bixio, and I felt sure of succour. He was hurrying to Garibaldi, but grasping the point with a soldier's promptness, he detached a part of his force to strengthen Patsy. I just waited to see the men turn in the right direction, and was off again amid the cheers of the Red Shirts.

The sounds of firing grew nearer; I was approaching the scene of battle, and knew that Garibaldi would be where the bullets fell thickest. Men passed, very slowly, to the rear, but none overtook me. Staggering along I sought the General, when I felt my arm gripped. Turning, I saw the genial face of Menotti Garibaldi.

"Your father?" I gasped.

"He is here!" And, turning once more, I saw the Chief himself.

"Pilo is dead!" I cried, "and the enemy are trying to force the pass. My comrade will stand till death, but without help he must soon be overcome. Bixio has sent some men, but not enough. The Royals mean to strike at your rear."

"Pilo dead!" I shall never forget the mournful-

ness of those simple words. Then the soldier came to the front ; and soon a strong detachment was speeding towards the pass, with orders to hold it till the main body had retired.

I tried to go too ; but, reeling dizzily, I should have fallen had not the Chief himself caught me in his arms.

CHAPTER VIII

A SURPRISE VISIT

"ARE you hurt, old man?"

"No, only a bit faint."

"Well, you are a regular flier! Deerfoot, and those fellows, aren't in it with you!"

"And you're a regular quiz! Have we had to fall back?"

"Yes, the Royals were too strong. But it isn't a defeat; we're only making a reconnaissance. At least that's how the yarn runs. We've paid dear for it, though. Poor old Pilo! I'd rather have lost my right arm than see him go down. Splendid fellow; straight as a die! It seems hard, doesn't it, after waiting and toiling twelve years, to be cut off with the goal in sight?"

"It does, indeed. Who takes his place?"

"I do, worse luck, till we get into Palermo. These Sicilians are obstinate chaps, and wouldn't move a peg unless I led them. That's the worst of being so popular! Hard lines on you too."

"On me?"

"Yes. You're my second in command, *pro tem*. I've borrowed you from the General till Palermo's taken, and then the cards are to be shuffled afresh. Have you had anything to eat lately? No? Well,

get up and try to walk as far as my noble band. Don't leave the blanket; wrap it round your shoulders —'twill give you an air of dignity."

Sad-hearted and gloomy, Pilo's men hung about in their quarters. The death of their beloved leader had depressed them very much, yet, at the same time, had aroused a desire for vengeance. To Patsy they showed every mark of respect because he had been the friend of their chief, and his orders were obeyed with readiness.

"We lost a good many men up in the pass," said my chum, looking round. "Mostly wounded, though. They've been taken to the rear. Those fellows you got sent on just saved us."

"That's all right, then; it must have been warm work, though."

"Warm?" cried Patsy, "that isn't a quarter strong enough! The enemy came rolling up in clouds. We'd cleared out the advance party only just in time. There must have been a thousand men on the hill from first to last. When the second relief arrived we hadn't a cartridge left, and were throwing stones! 'Twas a real case of touch and go."

"Not very pleasant getting away, I should think?"

"The Red Shirts saw to that; we went down first."

"What's the next move?"

"Haven't heard. Am waiting for orders."

"Here they are, then."

A young Red Shirt approached and asked for Lieutenant O'Connor. Giving Patsy a sealed note, he said, "From the General, who relies on your carrying out his instructions."

Opening the note and reading the contents, Patsy

replied with sparkling eyes, "Tell the General he can trust to us. He couldn't have given us a better job."

The messenger looked at him in admiration. We English were very popular with the liberating army.

"I will give the General your reply," he remarked.

"Just our ticket!" exclaimed Patsy, when the messenger had gone. "Read it yourself."

"This evening at dusk you will advance your men on the Monreale road to attract the enemy's attention. Fall back slowly, fighting, but not at close quarters. At Santa Christina you will turn eastward, and make a forced march to Miselmeri. Your business is to harass and deceive the enemy, making him believe the army is in full retreat to Corleone. You will act independently, unless otherwise ordered by Colonel Orsini."

"Risky!" I remarked.

"Spicy!" corrected Patsy. "We'll lead the regulars a pretty dance. Not much danger, but just enough to make it exciting."

"I wonder what the General's going to do?"

"Break up camp and try for another quarter."

"I hope he won't strike till we catch up again."

"Greedy fellow, you want to be in everything!"

Having obtained a supply of ammunition and a modicum of provisions, we waited impatiently till dusk. The main body had also received instructions, and directly it grew dark the camp broke up, the Red Shirts swinging off at a smart pace, while we proceeded toward Monreale.

"It's going to be a wild night," observed Patsy, looking at the black clouds overhead.

"So much the better for us!"

"Only the rain will put the fires out, and I meant having a jolly good blaze."

We pushed on steadily along the rough road till the scouts returned to say we were almost in touch with the enemy's outposts. Patsy now ordered the guides to work round to the right, away from Garibaldi's line of retreat, and, dividing the band into subdivisions, sent them to gather brushwood and to build fires at long intervals. While the irregulars were at work, he and I crept forward to examine the hostile lines. The Royals, evidently not liking the threatening aspect of the weather, had made themselves comfortable for the night, and Garibaldi could have retreated almost without precautions.

But retreat was only part of his plan. He wished to draw the enemy from their base by making them believe he was retiring to Corleone.

"It's a pity to disturb 'em," said Patsy, grinning. "We shall spoil their beauty sleep. I wonder if our fellows are ready?"

"Don't be impatient, we can allow another ten minutes yet."

"I'm afraid of the rain, that's all."

With about a score of men we lay down opposite one of the outposts and waited. The clouds grew blacker and lowered threateningly; they seemed almost to touch our heads. Presently Patsy turned to the man behind him.

"Goffredo," he said, "listen to me. We must capture a Bourbonist; an officer if possible. You will take charge of him. Tie his arms lightly so that the knots will slip, but guard him well all the same. Do you understand?"

"Yes, lieutenant."

"Very good; when you hear me say 'Garibaldi has fallen back on Corleone,' let him escape; not clumsily though. Can you do it?"

"Trust me, sir."

"All right. Now it must be time. Are you ready? Mind, no stubborn fighting. Slip away when you are in danger; it's every man for himself to-night, and remember that Garibaldi depends on us."

A low hum of approval broke from the band, then Patsy got up, revolver in hand, gave the word, and ran forward. Instantly there arose a deafening din, as if all the bandits in Sicily had gathered together in that spot. Shouting, cheering, yelling, we dashed through the darkness, purposely opening fire at random.

At wide intervals there sprang up a semicircular line of fire, the ruddy flames presenting a weird sight in the surrounding darkness. The effect on the startled camp was laughable. The men at the outposts bolted like frightened rabbits; there was a rapid turning out, a tremendous running to and fro, the rattle of drums, the shrill call of the bugles. Most certainly we had succeeded in waking up the enemy.

We heard afterwards that they thought themselves surrounded, and, in the panic, scores of men ran for shelter to Palermo. By degrees, however, their general restored order, and sent a body of troops to learn the cause of the alarm. Another body was despatched to reconnoitre the scene of the fires, and soon several thousand soldiers were in motion.

Goffredo had captured a junior officer, who was kept on the run as we fell back fighting. The Sici-

lians were in their element. What they lacked in numbers they made up in noise: their yells being plainly heard above the din of firing. Gradually we retired, our men closing up and luring the Royals in pursuit.

We were making a pretended stand on the brow of a rocky hill when Patsy proceeded to carry out his plan. The Royalist officer was close at hand, guarded by Goffredo, when my chum, addressing an imaginary messenger, exclaimed sharply, "Tell him they're too strong. He must take his force back to cover Santa Christina."

There seemed to come an answer out of the darkness, and then Patsy turned to me saying, "Somebody has blundered! Garibaldi has fallen back on Corleone."

"Hist!" said I, "don't forget we have a prisoner."

"All right. Goffredo will keep him safe. Look out, my lads, here they come."

As the enemy advanced, we of course gave way, but Goffredo unluckily slipped in the confusion, and the prisoner, taking advantage of the opportunity, escaped to his friends, carrying his newly acquired information with him.

"Smart fellow that," said Patsy, laughing. "There's nothing like keeping your ears open."

"Or your mouth if you happen to be thirsty," I answered, as the clouds opened and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Now our fellows will get a wash!" cried he merrily.

I won't try to describe that storm, but the typical expression "drowned rats" would have been far too

weak to apply to us. Happily our work was done, and we took comfort in the thought that, as soon as day broke, the Royals would be off post-haste to Corleone to surprise Garibaldi. Accordingly Patsy sent forward the majority of the irregulars to wait for him at Santa Christina, while we hung about in the storm watching for the Royals to advance.

At dawn the pursuit was resumed, but now we retired rapidly to Santa Christina, where, to keep up the deception, several provision-carts, a number of camp-followers, and a part of the artillery had been assembled.

Colonel Orsini congratulated Patsy on the success of his exploit, directed him to proceed without delay to Miselmeri, and himself continued his retreat still further towards Corleone, meaning to double back and rejoin us at Miselmeri, which he afterwards did.

"Garibaldi will be in an awkward box if they don't happen to go straight on," suggested my chum as we left the village.

"You'd better let me stay behind to see."

"That isn't a bad idea. I'll post a few men at intervals on the road, so, should anything go wrong, the information can be brought in quickly. If it's all right, you can pick them up on your way."

Thus it was arranged, and Patsy marched off, leaving two Sicilians with me, of whom Goffredo was one. The rocks afforded many fine hiding-places, and, selecting one, we lay down.

A second body of irregulars had now taken up the task of decoying the Royals, and as the latter advanced they were greeted by a stinging volley of musketry, throwing them into momentary confusion. Recover-

ing quickly, the van made a bold rush and swept the village; the insurgents, of course, retiring rapidly.

The cheerful dawn and the continued retreat of our men put the Royals in good spirits. They passed by merrily, and soon we saw their advance-guard winding up the hills on the opposite side.

By this time the cavalry must have sighted the rearmost carts, and, perfectly satisfied, I gave the word for Miselmeri. The camp was alive with Red Shirts, who, having partly recovered from the fatigue of their night march, were intent now on enjoying themselves. For Garibaldi's comfort and convenience a tent had been rigged up with an old blanket stretched over pikes, while a boy sentry stood on guard at the opening.

At the corner of a large field I espied our contingent, and, on going over, was greeted by an outburst of laughter from a group some distance off.

"Good old Jimmy! Where d'you get your uniform made?"

"Howard, did you say? One of the Norfolk Howards?"

"He looks a regular swell in full regalia! I like Patsy's undress better; it isn't so gaudy."

There was another burst of good-humoured laughter, and then my chum said, "Come on, Jimmy. These fellows have been roasting me this half-hour!"

"And I'm to do duty for you? Much obliged! But who are they? Members of the new police?"

"Bravo, Jimmy! That's a bull's-eye, first shot! Keep it up and we'll rout 'em yet!"

The youngest, and cheekiest, of Patsy's visitors shook my hand, saying, "Dirty, but honest! Glad to

see you, Jimmy! especially in your masquerade clothes! Don't blush. You know Tarleton, I believe? Mr. Adamson, Brigadier-General James Howard of the Sicilian army, commonly known as 'Jimmy!'

If the British navy ever contained a saucier midshipman than Teddy Mackworth, I hadn't the pleasure of his acquaintance. I said so then, but the remark fell flat, his friends evidently treating it as a commonplace.

But really Patsy and I offered sport to the unthinking. Our clothes hung in tatters, our hands and faces were daubed with mud, our hair was matted and tangled, while Patsy, at least, required the application of a razor:

A stroll down Pall Mall with Teddy and his friends in their immaculate uniform would have caused a sensation. After some further chaff I asked what brought them to Miselmeri.

"Pleasure," replied Teddy. "The *Onyx* is in harbour at Palermo, and we got a day's leave to shoot game. We reached here just in time to see Patsy march in at the head of his army. Drums beating, colours flying! Oh, it was a grand sight! Made me quite wish I could volunteer."

"No good, Teddy," I replied, "you're too young!"

"Besides," remarked Patsy gravely, "we only accept men with good characters; so you're barred again."

"Unless your duties are too onerous," observed Mr. Adamson, who enjoyed the fun in a quiet way, "will you come and lunch with us? Our conveyance is in the village with a hamper in it."

"A hamper!" cried Patsy. "Cold chicken, veal pie, salad, and a glass of champagne? Certainly. I'm

at liberty. Jimmy, I'm afraid, will have to attend to his regimental duties."

"Inspect the men's kits and see their hair is nicely parted? Come on, you two humbugs!" said Teddy. "I don't believe you've seen a decent lunch since landing!"

We went off together, laughing merrily as only light-hearted youngsters can. Nearer the village ran a tiny brook, and, as we stopped to rub some of the dirt from our hands and faces, a kindly voice exclaimed, "Let me lend you a piece of soap, gentlemen!"

"Garibaldi!" cried Patsy, in astonishment.

The General sat beside the stream placidly smoking the half of a cigar. He also was in undress, his uniform consisting of gray trousers, old felt hat, and a broad handkerchief thrown over his massive shoulders. He had evidently been busy in the laundry line, for his red shirt was hanging to dry on a neighbouring bush.

"Always seize your opportunities," he remarked, giving me the half-used cake of soap, "it's a good plan."

Patsy introduced his friends, and it was strange to observe how the grand yet simple dignity of the veteran rose superior to his unconventional appearance. In five minutes, as Tarleton said, you forgot the missing shirt and realised inly that you were in the presence of a truly great man.

While Patsy and I washed, the others entered into conversation, and Mr. Adamson invited the General to join us at luncheon. For this he had not time, but he pressed us all to return and partake of some strawberries a friend had sent him. We consented willingly, and, having put on his shirt, the great soldier led the way to the field. Here our English

friends were introduced to various members of the staff, and we regaled ourselves freely on the fine luscious fruit.

"They seem nice fellows," remarked Teddy, as, after a cordial leave-taking, we strolled towards the village.

"A good many youngsters!" commented Tarleton.

"That accounts for Teddy's sympathy."

"They'll find Palermo a hard nut to crack," said Mr. Adamson. "If the regulars choose to fight, they can hold the place for ever. With all due respect to our friends here, a disorganised rabble makes a poor fighting-machine."

"We want grooming," Patsy said, with a sly glance at Mr. Adamson's uniform, "then we should make a better show; but our fellows shoot better in ragged shirts than the enemy in well-buttoned tunics."

"And we're handier with the bayonet," I observed.

"While the officers," exclaimed Patsy, as we approached the inn where the carriage was, "are complete masters with the knife and fork."

"Though a trifle rusty in the exercise!" laughed Teddy.

"You mean the knife and fork are rusty from disuse," I said.

"Why not unpack the hamper in the open?" suggested Tarleton. "The fresh air will give us a keener appetite."

Patsy clapped him on the back. "You're a genius, Tarleton! I vote for anything that will put edge on my appetite."

So it was agreed, and we made an immediate attack on the goodly hamper, which held out bravely till overwhelmed by numbers. I have been at many

feasts since then, but none has ever equalled the *al fresco* banquet at Miselmeri. As the viands disappeared, quip and jest kept us in roars of merry laughter. The wit was, perhaps, not too keen, but it served, and, as the ball of light badinage was tossed from one to the other, we forgot for the time that life held anything serious.

As became the senior of the party, Mr. Adamson was first to recognise the important fact that time does not stand still.

"We must be moving," he said reluctantly.

"Especially," added Teddy, "as we have a two-horse carriage to take along; but for that, we need not hurry."

"Why did you bring 'em?" asked Patsy.

"For exercise, my good fellow. Something to push at and strengthen the muscles. Tarleton, the lazy beggar, wanted to come with one gee-gee."

"Well, according to your account, 'twould have been a saving of labour."

"Yes, but they always drive 'em in pairs in this part of the world. One helps to hold the other up."

The pair in question really seemed to confirm the truth of Teddy's statement. They had something of the general appearance of a horse, an ample supply of loose skin, and numerous sharp bones. I cast about in my mind for some neat remark that would fitly express my appreciation of the turn-out, but Teddy was too quick.

"If," said he regretfully, "you two could be induced to mount the box the thing would be complete. Can't we strike a bargain?"

"Take him away, Mr. Adamson!" I exclaimed.
"He's too young to be trusted with leave of absence."

Meanwhile the horses were got in, the empty hamper was packed away, Tarleton tipped the landlord, ostler, and superintendents—as Teddy called the lookers-on—and it was time to say farewell. For an instant the chaff dropped, and we shook hands seriously.

"Of course you'll do your duty, and that sort of thing," said Mr. Adamson, "but don't run into unnecessary danger. From what I can see, there will be plenty of heavy fighting without your leading forlorn hopes!"

"Good-bye!" cried Tarleton. "Good luck!"

"Don't mind my teasing," said Teddy. "It's only chaff after all. I should be sorry enough if either of you came to grief."

The little rascal's gravity did not last long. He shook hands and took his seat, but when, after much urging, the sorry-looking horses concluded to make a start, "Richard was himself again."

"Take care of yourselves," he bawled, "and, whatever happens, don't spoil your uniforms! they're too expensive to be replaced!"

There was a sound of good-humoured laughter, a waving of hands, and, amidst the noisy cries of the spectators, the rickety old vehicle disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Nice young man that," said Patsy as we turned back. "I could hardly keep a straight face when, marching into Miselmeri at the head of my brigands, I caught sight of him."

"Why did they come?"

"Thought there was some fighting going on. That's inducement enough for Teddy Mackworth and his

friends. Still, I'm glad we met them. They provided a very good lunch."

"Did you notice Adamson's face when we surprised the General at his laundry-work?"

"'Twas rather a strain on his nerves. He thought it *infra dig.*, perhaps. We shall make good sport in the gun-room to-night. That young monkey of a Mackworth will pile the agony on high."

"Well, we do look rather like a pair of scarecrows. Last night's storm didn't improve our beauty. However, we got the work done, and that's the main thing."

"Yes, the Chief was delighted. He complimented me before the staff."

Goffredo met us at our quarters with the information that the General wished to see Lieutenant O'Connor immediately. Patsy went off to the primitive tent, returning with an order to have his Sicilians ready in two hours' time to march in advance of the main army towards Palermo.

"We've to put ourselves under the orders of La Maza, who will lead all the Sicilians," he said. "I'll just give Goffredo his directions and then have a nap. Don't you trouble to come."

Choosing a cosy corner, I lay down, closed my eyes, and was soon in a fast sleep, which lasted till the bugle-call wakened me.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORMING OF PALERMO

It wanted a quarter to ten o'clock. The men had eaten their scanty supper and were falling in. The noise of the bugles, the sharp stern words of command, the pawing of horses' hoofs, the clattering of weapons, the tramp of feet as a detachment here and there moved to take up a new position, mingled in the night air. I looked around at the shadowy figures with an eerie feeling. They seemed ghostly, unreal creatures of the imagination, not beings of flesh and blood. The night march of an army is apt to try the nerves!

Patsy's men were well in hand, and only waited for the order to march. Gradually the creeping figures closed up; a mounted aide, trusting to his horse's eyes, galloped past with orders; there was a tramping of feet ahead of us; the guides had started.

Silently we moved, stepping warily in the darkness over an unknown road. Before us lay Palermo, and the enemy; behind lay Corleone, and the enemy! Should the latter have turned in time to act with the former, it seemed to me they could crush us with the greatest ease. I did not like to think what a dose of grape would effect on the irregulars constituting the advance-guard. However, we trudged on peacefully, following those in front. The road was

a series of ruts and rocks. Sometimes we slipped in the holes, sometimes we took the skin off our legs against the rocks: and neither was pleasant.

Once, word came from the front to halt, and, on going to learn the reason, I found that the guides had missed the way. This was excusable but awkward, since we were completely blocked in a rocky pass where an active foe might have mowed us down in scores. After half-an-hour's delay we moved on again, greatly to my satisfaction, though the road, if anything, became worse. It was now a sheer uphill climb, and the huge overhanging boulders closing in on both sides did not tend to raise our spirits. The descent on the other side was easier but more calamitous; the slip of a foot sent a man flying headlong, and many were the rough tumbles before we reached the bottom.

Another long climb brought us to the village of Gibilrossa, where just before daybreak the army halted. From a number of insurgents who had arrived from Palermo our Chief learned the position of the defences.

The city is situated on the north coast of Sicily, at the mouth of the river Oreto, within an amphitheatre of hills called Conca d'Oro (Golden Shell) from its beauty. Two roads only, the Termini and Monreale, lead to it, and we were advancing by the former. The old town is surrounded by a line of ramparts, which, however, do not extend to the suburbs. In addition to the strong places in Palermo, the port was defended by the immensely strong castles of Castellamare and Castello Lucio, the former of which completely commanded the town.

While the leaders conferred, the men lay down to snatch a little rest.

"I'm glad the day's breaking," observed Patsy. "I don't think these fellows could stand a stiff fight in the dark."

"D'you think the Neapolitans will bolt?"

"That all depends on the people. If they rise, we shall get in; if not, we shall have our journey for nothing."

"The Chief won't go back!"

"He can't help himself if the men run. I'm sorry poor Pilo isn't here. A successful rush into Palermo would have repaid him for years of misery."

"Queer how often the rewards come too late! Hullo, they're beginning to move. There go the Palermians! Our turn next!"

"While the Reds wait to do the work after we've failed."

Springing to their feet our men fell into line, grasped their motley weapons firmly, and, at the word of command, set off with a swinging step. The light was broadening, and the men gathered fresh confidence on being able to see their comrades. Our band, at least, seemed very determined, instinctively quickening their steps at the first sound of firing. Seizing the moment of inspiration Patsy drew his sword, and with a cry of "Forward," dashed to the front. Breaking into a run, we advanced cheering. For real downright cheering our fellows would yield place to few.

From the yells and rapid discharge of musketry ahead I judged a serious fight was in progress, and presently a number of irregulars, belonging to the advance-guard, came running back at full speed.

Greeting these doughty warriors with a derisive shout, we pressed on to Ponte dell' Ammiraglio, where the Royals stoutly defended the passage of the little river. The bodies of the slain, the sight of wounded men crawling to the rear, showed there was little child's play about attack or defence.

The insurgents redoubled their yells at our approach, and, without stopping to form, Patsy ordered his men to charge. As long as our courage did not evaporate we made first-class fighting troops.

With one bound we dashed at the Royals, hurling them back, fighting, shouting, struggling — a disorganised mob of men! Again the Sicilian war-cry rent the air, and there was a shout of "Porta dei Termini!"

Patsy now endeavoured to get his men into something like order, but they were too excited: the first blush of success had turned their heads, and away they went towards the gates, whooping and firing.

Even in the heat of the fight I laughed at the look of disgust on my chum's face. He was like a disconcerted hen, who has hatched a brood of ducklings and sees them take to the water; only Patsy had more than a suspicion that his ducklings could not swim.

"Come on!" he cried, his habitual good humour sweeping away his annoyance. "If we can't lead, we must follow!"

By this time the insurgents were swarming towards the gates, making simultaneous attacks on Porta Scala, Porta San Antonio, and Porta dei Termini.

Our men were at the last named, and thither we rushed. The gate had been walled up half-way in expectation of attack, and the fighting was furious in the extreme. The Bourbons fired volley after volley

into the struggling crowd, which began gradually to melt away.

Catching sight of Goffredo with his hat gone, his face blackened by powder, and his eyes bloodshot, I commanded him sharply to get our men out of the fight, and rally them on their leader. Some were already slain, many wounded; others, having had their fill of fighting, had departed to cheer from a distance. By degrees we gathered the remnant together, and, in good order, again dashed at the gate. A withering volley sent us back pell-mell; the Bourbons were evidently improving in their shooting.

Rallying our men with difficulty, Patsy delivered a stirring appeal in the choicest Sicilian and English, mixed. I expect the fellows did not understand a word, but they cheered all the same, brandishing their firelocks threateningly.

"Forward!" Slowly, then at the double, finally with the impetuosity of a mill-stream, we rushed over the fire-swept space. The battle was getting into my head now, and I yelled with the rest.

Fleet-footed as a hare Patsy kept in front, his eyes flashing, his tawny curls waving in the light breeze. The Sicilians might not understand his speech, but there was no mistaking his actions. They followed us bravely, with the greatest resolution. Once there was a slight hesitancy as a well-aimed dose of grape thinned our ranks, but it passed instantly, and we lost hardly the fraction of a second.

Nearer and nearer we approached, we were at the gate, when suddenly the Royals poured into us such a searching storm of grape and musketry that hardly the finest troops in the world could have faced it.

The Sicilians dispersed, running in all directions, anywhere to escape that terrible fire. In vain Patsy called to them to come back, vainly I flourished my sword and pointed towards the gate—they had had enough of the gate.

The defenders laughed in derision, invited us to come inside, asked where we had left Garibaldi, and if we were running back to fetch him. My brave chum would have stood there to be killed, but I forced him into a place of safety.

"Don't be silly!" I said. "Let's see if we can pick up any of the men. There's poor old Goffredo with a bullet in his arm. He's game for another try, I know."

In every direction the din of strife now grew louder. To right and left men were rushing to the attack or standing sturdily in defence. How the battle went elsewhere of course we did not know, but we hoped better than in our particular corner. The best of Patsy's men had fallen, the worst had run away, but there still remained a few stout-hearted fellows who agreed to try one more charge. Besides these, others joined us, waifs and strays from various bands that had dispersed.

As far as numbers went we got together quite a respectable array, though a trifle mixed in the matter of dress and weapons. Still, full of hope, Patsy and I placed ourselves at their head and led the way.

This time the Royals waited till we were fairly close up, and then discharged a murderous volley into our midst. The men staggered, uttered cries of despair and would have run, but suddenly from
-> behind rose a sharp crisp cheer, a shout of "*Viva Garibaldi!*" the rush of many feet, and the Red Shirts

had caught us, pushed us forward, almost hurled us against the wall.

Now the fight grew frenzied. Stiffened by their allies, the Sicilians took heart of grace; the men of the "Thousand" advanced as if nothing could stop them. On we went in a pack, carried the gates with a rush, and found ourselves in Palermo.

The thoughtful Neapolitans had made every preparation to receive us. Directly inside the gate we were confronted by a stout barricade, strongly manned. A blaze of flame and a storm of bullets sent us back, and I saw one of Garibaldi's most prominent officers fall. Dashing into the open, a couple of his men carried him under cover, and then all the brave fellows formed up for a determined rush. The Reds were in the centre, the Sicilian irregulars acting independently constituted the two wings, our personal detachment being on the right.

"Forward, my children!" cried a strong manly voice, and out we darted. To stand still meant death; in speed alone lay our chance of safety. Side by side Patsy and I raced to the barricade, nor did our handful of Sicilians linger behind.

Whizz! whizz! Ping! ping! The bullets flew, the men fell fast, but the survivors advanced steadily. The Reds were at the barricade, and a race ensued between them and us as to which party should first reach the top. Up we scrambled anyhow, clinging where we could, hoisting ourselves on other men's shoulders, planting our feet in the tiniest of tiny cracks, holding like grim death to the slightest projection, while all the time the Royals peppered away at us furiously.

A roar of applause greeted Patsy's appearance on the summit, but he did not stay there long. Knife or bullet or slip of the foot, I knew not which, sent him tumbling. An instant later I was in the midst of them, fighting for bare life. The burly Goffredo was the first to join me; then the arrival of several others made the conflict more even. Still the Royals fought so desperately that, but for the Red Shirts, I honestly believe we should have been thrust back. They, however, carried the barricade in fine style, and seeing this our opponents prepared to withdraw.

At the critical moment I went very near to death, so near that the hot sweat turned cold on my brow, and I gave a little cry of apprehension.

It happened in this way. In parrying a savage blow I lost my balance and was brought to my knees. A Sicilian promptly knocked my assailant over, but, before I could rise, a young officer rushed at me fiercely. I was powerless to ward off the impending blow. The sword, already stained with blood, described an arc in the air, but stopped in its downward sweep so close to me that it grazed my head.

"I told you we should meet," the fellow cried, and, plunging into the fray, was lost to sight.

"Carlo Rugieri!" I gasped in astonishment.

The Royals were now retreating all along the line, but only to a stronger barricade. Faint, dizzy, and confused, I ran with my men, hardly knowing what we did. Everywhere the uproar grew louder and more deafening. The government had torn the clappers from the bells, but the citizens, not to be baffled, beat them with hammers.

Now, too, the soldiers experienced the fury of an

exasperated populace. Every man who by hook or by crook could get possession of a weapon used it. From the open windows the women hurled heavy missiles at the troops; even children joined in the fray. Here and there the Bourbon soldiery stood their ground with splendid resolution, but their bravery was of no avail. Attacked in front by the invaders, in the rear by infuriated townsmen, they were forced to give way. The barricades became useless, every position was turned, and soon the garrison fled helter-skelter through the narrow streets seeking a place of safety.

By this time my irregulars had got entirely out of hand. They were natives of Palermo who had risen with Rosalino Pilo, and now, recognising many acquaintances among the unruly mob, they went off to join their friends and relatives. Even Goffredo succumbed to the general weakness, running to find his wife and children, who were ignorant he still lived. Their original chief was dead, Patsy had fallen, of me they knew little and cared less. It was humiliating, perhaps, but not surprising that in the circumstances they elected to vanish.

Thus left alone I retraced my steps sadly, intending to seek Patsy. Scores of bodies lay in the streets. Here one saw the Bourbon uniform, there the goat-skin of a mountaineer; in one place the rags of a city beggar, in another the red shirt of a Garibaldian volunteer. My own remnant of uniform, stained, torn, and ragged, was greeted with wild—and to be frank—troublesome enthusiasm. The people cheered me to the echo, crowding round, shaking my hands, embracing me, and showering blessings on my head.

It was a repetition of the night affair at Quarto, on an extended scale.

Still, it occasionally happens that good springs from evil. It was so in this case. Giving a full description of Patsy's appearance, I set my demonstrative friends searching for him, and before long he was discovered. Running to the spot, I saw him lying on the ground, dead or insensible. There was a nasty cut under one eye, but I could see no trace of a bullet, and, placing my hand on his bared chest, I was overjoyed to find that his heart still beat.

Now my noisy enthusiasts proved of real service. One sturdy fellow produced a bottle containing stimulant of some kind, and, while I forced a portion into Patsy's mouth, a woman ran to fetch some clean water and rags to wash and bind his wounds. All were eager to suggest remedies, and, had Patsy died, it would not have been from lack of ways of keeping him alive. They were a kindly, thoughtful crowd; but their knowledge of the healing art was not exactly on a level with their good intentions. Perhaps, however, their loudly expressed sympathy had some effect, for my chum opened his eyes and gazed dreamily into my face. Then he sat up, and the crowd cheered.

"Do you know me, old man?" I asked anxiously, and the blue eyes smiled feebly.

"Not much damage," he whispered. "Tumbled over—head queer—that's all. Did we take the barricade?"

"Rather! Half the town's ours now. Don't try to get up. Here, take a little more of this stuff."

"Vitriol!" said he, swallowing a mouthful. Then, after a pause, "Where are our fellows?"

"Gone home to see their wives and families."

He laughed quite cheerfully at this, and, after sitting quietly a few minutes longer, declared himself equal to walking.

"Must show ourselves to the General," said he, "or he'll think we've turned tail."

I helped him to rise, and, escorted by the delighted throng, led him slowly through the narrow streets into the main thoroughfare.

The fighting in that particular quarter of the town was over; the Royals had returned to their strongholds, and we heard from the excited citizens that Garibaldi was established in the Town Hall.

"Did you get hurt?" asked my chum, as, turning to the left, we proceeded towards the Via Macqueda.

"No, but I had a near miss." And I told him of Carlo's chivalrous generosity.

"Lucky boy, to have such a friend in the hostile camp!" he said cheerfully. "Now, in my case, he'd have struck first and recognised me afterwards."

"Well, neither of us can grumble much so far. There are many poor fellows who would be glad to be in our shoes."

"Wait a bit," remarked Patsy, holding up a bare foot; "you'd better choose another simile!"

"Ah! I had forgotten. 'Pon my word, Patsy, you do look a vagabond! That cut under the eye was the one thing wanted—the finishing touch, so to speak."

Crash! Wild screams of terror mingled with cries of pain. People ran past madly, forced themselves into doorways, crouched against walls, surged tumultuously into open houses.

Crash! Crash! Since our landing in Sicily we had become familiar with the awful music, but in the

crowded streets of the city it sounded doubly appalling. For a time the air was thick with shell, grape, canister, and round shot. There was no way of escape from the murderous missiles; they burst in the street, they ploughed through the buildings, scattering death and destruction around. In the middle of the road one woman stood so dazed that she had no power of movement; she seemed rooted to the ground. Thrusting Patsy against the wall and bidding him stay there, I ran swiftly into the open.

"Signora!" I cried, "come away quickly or you will be killed. Do you hear?"

The terrified woman did not move a muscle. Looking into her eyes I saw they were wide open, but expressionless as glass. Her face was white; she might have been cut in marble by the cunning hand of the sculptor.

"Take her arm, Jimmy, quick! She's half dead with fright."

There was my loyal-hearted chum on the other side of the woman! Weakness, pain, dizziness, were all forgotten in the resolve that I should not go alone into danger. I did not thank him, but gripped the woman's arm, and between us we got her across the street into a large house. The lower rooms were crowded with frightened people, with whom we left the unfortunate woman, and ventured again into the street.

"This is too exciting to be pleasant," said Patsy. "Where is the Town Hall?"

"To the left, I believe, a little farther along. Look out!" and I pulled him back just as a huge piece of falling coping smashed into a thousand atoms.

"Luck again!" said he, "and good eyesight. If it's all the same to you, Jimmy, when you bring me out

for another promenade we'll take a fresh route. There's too much distraction along this street."

"We've got it pretty much to ourselves, anyway!"

"Yes, I've noticed that. No crowding at present."

I can't answer for Patsy, but personally I felt very much relieved when we reached a part of the thoroughfare free from bursting shells.

"They're doing the thing systematically," said my chum, looking back. "What a horror 'twill be when the houses begin to burn! And there's no chance of rushing the castle!"

"Not the slightest. Besides, the ships are throwing bombs."

"If they keep on long enough, Palermo will be a city of ashes."

Approaching the Pretoria Piazza, near which the Town Hall is situated, we found the road blocked by crowds of citizens cheering lustily for Garibaldi. Very slowly we forced a passage, the people shouting at sight of my red shirt and looking eagerly into Patsy's face.

At the gates of the building itself the pressure was even greater; but, fortunately, Menotti stood talking to the officer of the guard, and, hearing my name, came forward.

"Howard!" he exclaimed. "My father will be delighted. He was afraid you were killed. Is this a fellow-countryman?"

"Lieutenant O'Connor, Pilo's friend. He led a body of insurgents at the assault this morning."

"Well, go in, I can't stay now. I'm off into the town."

Waving his unwounded arm he departed, leaving us to the care of an officer on duty.

CHAPTER X

A CRUEL BOMBARDMENT

THROUGH the kindness of the Garibaldian, whose name I do not remember, we were supplied with food and drink, which we needed badly. The Chief was too busy to be interrupted, so we lay down on a bench in one of the lower rooms to wait till he was more at liberty.

This opportunity for rest suited me capitally. The night march, the attack on the barricades, the heat, noise, and physical strain of the fighting had tired me considerably, and, stretching out on the hard bench, I then and there fell fast asleep. Two hours later I awoke with a start to find the General himself smiling kindly into my face.

"Poor boy," he exclaimed, "you have earned a rest. I have heard of your bravery at the gate."

"You are thinking of my comrade, General," I replied, springing to attention.

"Of both. A little bird carried the news to my ear."

"Well, General," said Patsy comically, "we have succeeded in losing our command. That is why we are here," and he related how the remnant of our irregulars had dispersed.

"Ah," replied Garibaldi, "they are fine fellows, but not greatly in love with discipline. You flung them into the fire too often! But they will fight stoutly

in their own way—are fighting now, I'll be bound. Is that you, Bixio? Are the men ready?"

"And eager, General. The bombardment has made them furious."

"Unleash them, then. We must have that battery. I want the town cleared by nightfall."

"And the palace?"

"The insurgents are attacking that. If they don't carry it, it can be isolated and rendered harmless."

Bixio saluted, and was on the point of withdrawing, when Patsy, always impulsive, chimed in, "Pardon me, General, but if there is any work afoot we might take part. We've had some food and a good rest, and feel fit for anything."

"I think you've done enough for one day."

"Let them come," observed Bixio grimly, "I can use them as messengers."

"Very well; you can trust them."

Bixio smiled. "I saw them at the gate this morning. Come on, my young cock-sparrows; we mustn't waste time."

Saluting the Chief, we left the room, and accompanied Bixio to the spot where he had assembled a body of Red Shirts. They welcomed his arrival with a cheer, as it foretold action, and the awful bombardment, the destruction of property, and the havoc committed amongst the helpless non-combatants had fired their blood. Some recognised me as an old acquaintance, and every one had a cordial glance for the two Englishmen.

Shot and shell still flew over the city, but the cannonade was less heavy, though the lull proved only temporary.

Marching at a swinging step, we proceeded along the broad thoroughfare till within sight of the Porta Macqueda, where the regulars had established a battery. Here Bixio called a halt, and made his arrangements for the attack. A swarm of insurgents covered the real assault, and, by distracting the enemy's attention, rendered good service. The affair was a repetition of storming the barricade. Twice we went forward with a rush, only to be hurled back staggering and broken. The third time, however, paid for all.

The gate was forced, the Reds in a solid body poured through, the insurgents flung themselves on the flanks of the beaten soldiery, a sharp, fierce, five minutes' tussle followed, and then the Bourbons fell back. Once they nearly rallied. A young officer, hatless, bleeding, and with disordered clothes, burst through the ranks. We saw him distinctly arguing, entreating, commanding. He turned and pointed toward us with his sword, urging the men to charge. His flashing eyes and animated features, his appeals to their honour, began to produce some effect. A number of the bravest rallied on him; the others, pausing in their flight, halted irresolutely.

The delay was fatal; it destroyed their chance for ever. With naked swords and bayonets fixed, we swept down like a whirlwind, literally carried away their valiant fighting group, caught the waverers on the hip, broke them like straws, tossed them hither and thither as the sea tosses its wreckage, flung them back panting and breathless. From a body of stout-hearted soldiers they degenerated into a flabby, nerveless crowd whose one idea was to escape from their

pursuers. They fled in all directions, some straight ahead, others surging through the narrow streets to right and left. And, wherever they went, there—close on their heels—hung the pitiless insurgents, with rusty pistols and firelocks, but with sharp, strong, keen-edged knives.

Quarter from the Red Shirts could be had for the asking, but the arms of the Palermitans were nerved by hereditary hatred. Regarding the flying soldiers as active agents of a detested tyranny, they slew without mercy. Old and young, men and women, strong and weak, joined in the chase.

Bixio sent Patsy back with a message to the Chief.

"Say we have taken the battery, and shall have this end of the town before night."

Patsy saluted and vanished. I ran forward with the general. The men from the battery suddenly stopped their flight; they had reached their comrades, who formed the last line of defence in that direction.

The insurgents, pressing forward too ardently, met with a warm reception. From every building, from behind walls and overturned carts, issued a steady fire which checked the rush.

Bixio brought his troops up standing. An able though fiery warrior, he did not intend sacrificing his men to no purpose. The Royals, well handled, held the town from the Francesco Church to the barracks of Quattro Venti, and seemed resolved on making a stout defence.

The young officer who had fought so valiantly at the battery was again in evidence. He exposed himself in the most reckless way, urging the men to stand fast, to reserve their fire, sometimes heading a

desperate rush on an advanced body of assailants. In spite of disordered attire and disfigured face I recognised my old acquaintance Carlo Rugieri, and my heart beat fast as the bullets whistled around his head.

I pointed him out to Patsy, who had now returned.

"Plucky!" said my chum, "but foolish. He'd do more good by keeping under cover."

"If all the Bourbons had fought like Carlo we shouldn't be here."

"Likely enough. There he goes, into that house at the corner; they're hauling him through the window."

"It looks like a regular little fortress. Now we're moving."

The talk was interrupted by Bixio, who called me to him. Pointing to the building he said coolly, "We must have that place! Take twenty men and clear the enemy out. Here, my lads! A score of volunteers to follow the Englishman! Not all of you; I want some to stay with me."

Without pausing to pick and choose, I took the first twenty men from the crowd and started with Patsy. At the same time Bixio made a rush for the barricade. It was unsuccessful, but in drawing the enemy's fire it was of use to us. We reached the building without losing a man, and half-a-dozen fellows with axes battered savagely at the door.

Carlo saw the new danger but was helpless to prevent it. A window just above commanded the entrance, but his men dared not approach; I had stationed several good shots to pick them off as they appeared.

Bang! bang! went the axes, and at the mighty strokes the door quivered, split, and finally fell with a crash. With a shout of triumph we dashed in pell-mell. A stinging volley stopped the rush of two or three; the rest of us pushed on. The building was full of fighting men. They swarmed in the hall and crowded the staircase. There was no room for shooting, it was a matter of cold steel alone.

In this the Bourbons had the best of it. Out-numbering us by at least three to one, they did not flinch. The extraordinary daring of the handful of Red Shirts, and the fierceness of their rush, at first gained an advantage. We cleared the hall, driving the soldiers back to the stairs; but beyond, it was impossible to move. Carlo, his face aflame with passion, held his men to their work. The situation was growing desperate, every moment of delay making it worse.

My brave fellows fell fast. I glanced at Patsy, who fought at my side; each of us knew the truth. Unless Bixio sent reinforcements nothing remained for us but retreat or annihilation. Carlo saw it too, and, like a true soldier, resolved to strike home while the power was still his.

"To me, my lads!" he shouted. "Down with the bandits! Strike! strike!" and with magnificent courage the youthful Royalist leaped into the midst of us.

Animated by his daring example, the soldiers, gathering for a spring, jumped. They came on furiously, some even dropping over the balustrades. The *mêlée* was awful. Packed close together, we surged backward and forward, a struggling, shouting, confused mob. Cheer and counter-cheer, the clash

of arms, the groans of the wounded, the shrieks of the dying, the short quick gasps of half-breathless men all mingled in the air.

Five minutes passed—the time seemed an age—when bleeding, broken, and crushed, we were flung almost bodily to the door. The Royals raised a cry of exultation, but their triumph lasted only a short time. From the street came a furious yell, the swift uneven tread of rushing feet sounded on our ears, the hall was blackened by dark forms, the soldiers retreated with blanched faces.

A wild throng of insurgents, bursting through the doorway, had flung themselves into the fight. Their coming turned the scale at once. Their numbers seemed without limit. Wearied by hard fighting, and utterly incapable of meeting this fresh attack, the Royals turned to fly. A glance at the savage faces of our rescuers showed that scant mercy would be dealt out to the retreating foe.

Collecting the remnant of my followers, I urged them to save as many lives as possible, and with that object we forced a passage through the fierce mob. Many of the soldiers were killed, several escaped by jumping from the windows; and the Red Shirts secured a large number who, throwing down their arms, begged for quarter. About this time Bixio smashed the barricade, his men rushed through, and the Royals everywhere retreating, left the city, with the exception of the Royal Palace and the Castle, in our hands.

"'Twas hot while it lasted!" said Patsy, looking at his broken sword. "The savages saved us."

"Yes, 'twas a narrow squeak. We'd better send those prisoners away while they're alive."

"And then?"

"I'm going to look for Carlo. He saved my life this morning."

Using the Garibaldians as an escort, I despatched the captives to the Town Hall, and set about my melancholy task.

"We shall find him near the door," said my chum. "He was close to me at the last rush."

The search did not occupy much time. Carlo had not budged an inch, but had fallen at the very head of his men. Raising the body gently and carrying it into the open air, we laid it on the ground.

Was he dead? It appeared so at first sight, but a closer examination showed he had only been stunned.

"He'll be up again in a day or two," said Patsy, "and fighting against us as obstinately as ever."

"If you will bring the poor fellow to my house," exclaimed a kindly voice, "I will take care of him."

The speaker was a pleasant-faced man dressed as a priest, and evidently a person of some authority. The curious sight-seers had made way for him, and now stood listening in silence.

"The sick man is a Bourbonist and my prisoner," said I.

"He will still be your prisoner, my son; but, having a little skill in surgery, I may restore him to health."

"And you will answer for him with your life?"

The priest smiled lightly. "Tell your chief you have trusted in the good faith of Fra Pasquale," said he.

Without more ado I permitted Carlo to be taken away, following as far as the priest's dwelling.

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Patsy as we turned back.

"Keep him out of mischief till the fight's over."

"A good notion! The fellow's sure to get killed if he's set at liberty."

By this time the strife was dying out in our neighbourhood, and people were busy attending to the hurts of the injured. Sounds of firing still came from other parts of the city, while from the citadel issued an almost continuous stream of bursting bombs and shrieking shells. The destruction was terrible, the misery inflicted appalling. Hardly a place was free from the thundering missiles. People were struck down in the streets and in their houses: even the dark cellars afforded but inadequate protection.

As a crowning evil fires broke out, spreading with startling rapidity. First in one quarter, then in another, tongues of flame burst forth, leaping, quivering into the air. Those who survived will long remember the horrors of that night.

Joining the Red Shirts, Patsy and I worked with them like galley-slaves. Surrounded by a blazing mass, with walls crashing and chimneys toppling into the street, we did our best to aid the terrified inmates of the burning buildings. House after house catching the flames blazed up quickly and fell in, sometimes, alas, before we could get the people out. It should have been dark, but the lurid flames lit up the whole place with vivid distinctness.

Here half-distracted women ran to and fro, calling aloud for their little ones. There strong men, whose faces were grimed with charcoal and sweat, worked with pick and spade among the ruins to see if haply they might yet rescue those dear to them.

And always those terrible shells flew screaming over

their heads or dropped into the midst of them, converting the rescuers into victims. I no longer wondered at the ruthless slaughter of the Bourbon soldiery, though they, poor fellows, were not responsible for these cruelties.

Suddenly a loud cry announced that a convent close by was in flames. The Red Shirts ran over in a body, and soon we were all busy, some saving the treasure, others leading the white-faced nuns into a place of comparative safety.

Thus the night passed. Every moment brought a new fatigue, a new danger, and even with the coming of dawn there was no respite. The gunners in the citadel, working in relays, maintained a vigorous bombardment, laying whole districts in ruins.

Dawn broadened into day; the sun rose, tipping the adjacent hills with purple and gold, but still the iron hail continued. The people were growing accustomed to their misery. They no longer cried out in fright or tried to hide themselves, but, standing passively with sullen features, accepted their fate. Only one thing—the coming of Garibaldi, roused them from their apathy.

As the grand old warrior moved along, contemptuous of danger, they crowded round, kissing his hand and pledging themselves to die, if necessary, to the last man, rather than again submit to Bourbon rule. It was strange what marvellous power this man with the tawny hair and statuesque head held over them. A word, a look, a gesture, and they would sacrifice life itself to do his bidding.

We were still engaged in watching the scene when a sharp voice exclaimed, "Well, my two runaways, you're not dead yet?"

Turning round we beheld Bixio, and instantly saluted him. He stared hard at our charred rags, our hands and faces blackened by the smoke, our eyes bloodshot from want of sleep and exposure to fire.

"Where have you been?" he demanded.

"Fighting the flames, General."

"All night?"

"Since the house was taken and you carried the barricade."

"Well, you've done your share, and more. Now take a rest; you look half dead with fatigue. Zasio!"

A lean, wiry, athletic-looking fellow stepped up, his hand to his cap.

"At your service, General."

"Take charge of these youngsters. Give them something to eat, and afterwards let them sleep. They are not to be disturbed without my orders."

"I will see to it, General."

"Go with him," said Bixio. "If you won't take care of yourselves, some one must do it for you."

"This way, signors!" cried Zasio briskly, and, not sorry at the chance of obtaining a good meal, we made our way through the crowd.

Zasio conducted us to the general's quarters, procured an ample supply of food, and showed us a room where we could lie down, crowning his favours by the loan of two greatcoats to serve as wraps.

"You're a gem, Zasio!" cried my chum. "I'll put you down in my will."

The soldier-servant grinned and pointed to the food.

"Get something to eat," he advised, "and then go

to sleep. The general may want you when he returns."

"Zasio, your words are words of wisdom, and shall be attended to. Now, Jimmy, sit up. Not carve? You artful old chap! You think to steal a march on me, but I'll catch you up. This is prime! Make the most of the feed, my boy; to-morrow, 'twill probably be biscuit and water."

"Without the biscuit, likely enough."

"That was poor Pilo's standing dish up in the mountains. I can't say Garibaldi keeps an extravagant larder, either. We aren't likely to run much to fat in this campaign."

I shook my head, having something better to do than waste time in frivolous chatter.

Zasio looked on good-humouredly as the food disappeared. He probably had never before seen two hungry Englishmen make a square meal. However, the feast did come to an end, and we went into the next room.

"I call this a lot better than dodging shells," said Patsy, wrapping himself up in his greatcoat. "My respects to your master, Zasio, and tell him he's a brick. Good night, Jimmy! What? Ah, I quite forgot! Well, good morning then, if you want to be precise, though it sounds odd."

I lay down beside him, covered myself over, closed my still smarting eyes, and before many seconds had passed was sleeping like a top.

CHAPTER XI

GOOD NEWS FROM NAPLES

PATSY always maintains that we should be sleeping still had not Zasio awakened us, and I am almost inclined to agree with him. However, the food and the long rest had done us such good that we turned out cheerfully for a spell of night duty.

Houses were still burning, and the bombs had not ceased, though they now fell only at long intervals. The streets had become quieter; bands of insurgents roamed about, some intent on vengeance, others on pillage, but the Red Shirts and the better class of patriots patrolled the city to prevent mischief. Patsy and I shared in this service, and many were the strange sights to be observed that night in the half-destroyed town. The majority were pathetic; some almost ludicrous. There was indeed the oddest mixture of tears and laughter, of joy and misery.

On being released from duty we proceeded to the house of Fra Pasquale in order to see Carlo. Receiving us at the door, the priest led the way into the young Royalist's room.

Carlo was awake and greeted us with a smile.

"Thanks!" he exclaimed, pressing my hand. "The good priest has told me all; you have saved my life."

"'Twas only paying off a debt, Carlo. I haven't forgotten what happened at the barricade."

"You are masters of the city?"

"Except the Royal Palace and the Castle."

"I am sorry," he answered simply.

"You should not be," exclaimed Patsy. "It is time these Bourbons were sent about their business. Why don't you come over to our side? You're far too good for that crowd."

Carlo looked my chum in the face.

"You don't understand," he said quietly. "I am a Neapolitan and my king is Francesco. I am a soldier and obey my general. Loyalty and obedience are not empty words with me. By joining Garibaldi I should advance in my profession, the people would cheer me, I might become a person of consequence, but I should have deserted my king and broken my oath. Let the rats leave the sinking ship, Carlo Rugieri will go down in her."

"But this Bourbon isn't worth the sacrifice!"

"Let each judge for himself. To me your Garibaldi is a robber and a bandit, a freebooter who should be hung like any other felon. Suppose he brought an army into your country to overturn your government! What would the English say then?"

"Faith!" replied Patsy, laughing, "we should make our swords talk."

"So, I hope, will the Neapolitans."

"Well, I admire your loyalty, anyhow; though I'm afraid you won't get much by it."

Anxious to learn something about my guardian, I asked Carlo if he had been in Naples recently.

"Yes," he replied, "and Signor Carter was still safe."

"In prison?"

"At St. Elmo."

"And there is no hope of escape?"

"I think not; at least till this trouble is at an end."

Fra Pasquale, who had left us to talk in private, now entered the room, saying, "My friends, if you will allow me to speak as a doctor, my patient has had enough excitement for one day."

"A fairly broad hint!" I cried, with a laugh. "Well, Carlo, good-bye for the present. We'll come to see you again soon."

"A plucky chap," said Patsy when we got outside, "but obstinate as a mule."

"It's lucky for us Francis of Naples hasn't many subjects like him."

My chum whistled. "I'll tell you what," said he presently, "we aren't out of the wood yet. Those fellows have only to sit tight a while longer, and we're done for. Our ammunition's giving out. I heard Sirtori say so this morning."

This was an ugly state of things, but the enemy played into our hands; their general, Lanza, agreeing the next day to meet Garibaldi aboard the British warship *Hannibal*. The old warrior set out early in the afternoon, amidst the plaudits of the populace. He had put on the shabby uniform of a major-general in the Sardinian army—a costume always kept in reserve for State occasions.

The city waited in breathless expectation for the result of the conference upon which so much depended. The youngsters in the army called the meeting a mistake. They thought we should drive the regulars into the sea. Older men, knowing this to be impossible, shook their heads ominously.

Patsy and I formed part of the guard at the Town

Hall when the General returned, and we eagerly scanned his face. He looked a trifle worried, but resolute and determined as ever. After a time whispers began to be heard among the soldiers. It was understood the negotiations had failed and that Garibaldi meant to fight. To us, who knew somewhat of the truth, the rumour seemed incredible, yet it was true. The news spread throughout the town, and the people came running up in crowds. The square was filled with a heaving mob; every outlet was blocked; I had never seen such a sea of heads in my life.

The appearance of Garibaldi evoked a tremendous outburst of enthusiasm, which ceased only when it was observed that he intended to speak. Like a blast from a war-trumpet his stirring words were flung out upon the air.

"People of Palermo," he cried, "the enemy has made me proposals which I judged humiliating to you; and, knowing that you are ready to bury yourselves under the ruins of your city, I refused."

The words, the tone, the flashing eyes, the simple grandeur of the speaker, acted on the people like strong waters. They went mad with passion and excitement. Hats were flung wildly into the air, and from thousands of throats there came a hoarse shout of "War! War!"

"Splendid piece of bluff!" exclaimed Patsy; "I wonder if 'twill pay."

"'Twill be awkward for us if it doesn't. There's not much fun in storming a fortress with empty guns."

"That would about wipe out the expedition."

The people of Palermo, however, had no misgivings as to the result. Garibaldi had bewitched

them. They saw everything just as he pleased. So, that evening, while the fate of their city trembled in the balance, they hung their battered dwellings with illuminations, as if for a feast.

Morning came at length, and what my chum had called a piece of bluff won the game. General Lanza, thoroughly deceived, agreed to evacuate the city and castle, taking himself and his troops back to Naples.

Our duties being considerably lessened by the armistice, Patsy and I spent our time in making acquaintance with Palermo and its vicinity, having first turned some of my spare cash into new clothes, which we badly needed. One evening we were strolling along the terrace of the Royal Palace with several members of the Staff, when a messenger came to say that an English naval officer was below inquiring for us.

"Teddy Mackworth," observed my chum, and Teddy it proved to be. He had Tarleton with him, and they soon joined us on the terrace.

"I should have come before," he remarked carelessly, "only——"

"The captain was afraid to trust you with leave," interrupted Patsy. "Go on, don't apologise."

Teddy looked at him with scorn.

"I was about to say I feared your personal appearance would hardly be the thing. As an officer of Her Majesty's Navy——"

"Pitch him over into the gardens, Jimmy!"

"However," continued Teddy graciously, "I am pleased to see you have advanced a little toward respectability. Don't you think they look cleaner, Tarleton?"

"The General has lent them another piece of soap!"

"Are your boots comfortable, Patsy? They feel

a little strange at first, no doubt, but you'll soon get used to them."

"Where are your bandits?"

"They've shed them with their old clothes."

"Lieutenant Howard, the General wishes to see you," said an aide, touching me on the shoulder.

"Call the guard, Patsy, if they're too troublesome," said I as I left them.

"Poor fellow!" cried Teddy with affected sympathy, "I expect he hasn't paid his tailor's bill."

Leaving my chum to entertain our lively visitors, I followed the aide to the Pavilion where Garibaldi had established his quarters. The Staff lived in the Palace; the General's quarters consisted of two small rooms and a hall. Passing through the hall, which served as a sleeping-room for the officers on duty, I approached the Chief's apartment. The furniture could hardly be described as luxurious. One corner was occupied by an iron bedstead, near which stood a small plain table; the General sat on a straight-backed, comfortless chair; another, over which a saddle hung, completed the inventory. There was no carpet.

As usual he was smoking half a cigar. A whole one would have savoured of reckless extravagance, and Garibaldi only squandered money on the poor. Looking up with a bright smile as I entered, he motioned to me to be seated.

"I have pleasant news," said he cheerfully. "I have heard from your friend Rugieri, at Naples."

"Does he mention my guardian?" I asked excitedly.

"Your guardian is free," he said, "but here is the letter: read."

Recognising Giovanni's handwriting, I began to read

intently. The first part did not interest me; the language was most mysterious, and presumably referred to the conspiracy against King Francis. Toward the end, however, there appeared this paragraph:—

“You will be glad to know that our English friend is out of danger. Working in secret and making use of the British consul, I have frightened the government into setting him free. He leaves Naples to-day, conditionally on his going straight to England. He must not return under pain of death. We shall miss his services, but he did well to accept the terms. I am to request you to inform the lad Howard, who, later on, is to rejoin his patron in England. Let me know any of your plans in which I can help. My son is in Sicily, fighting for the Bourbon. Should he fall into your hands, treat him tenderly for his father’s sake.”

GIOVANNI RUGIERI.”

My guardian was free, and by this time speeding toward England. My heart had not felt so light since leaving Naples.

“Thank God for that news!” I cried impulsively.

“Signor Carter will find it more pleasant in London than in the dungeons of St. Elmo!” remarked Garibaldi. “Ah, he is a generous Englishman! Many of our rifles should be stamped with his name. And the last part of the letter. That is sad, is it not? Suppose my Menotti suddenly went off to fight for Francesco!”

I laughed so heartily at this comical idea that my mirth infected the General.

“Well, well,” he resumed, “it is not likely. But this son of Giovanni’s; I feel sorry for his father.”

"Carlo Rugieri is a fine fellow," I replied. "He saved my life at the barricades," and I related the circumstance.

"Fra Pasquale?" mused the Chief, "yes, he belongs to us. That will answer very well. Let the lad remain there. And now, you? There is no longer any reason why you should risk your life for strangers. Your guardian is free; he will expect you in London."

"At the end of the campaign, General. We English like to finish what we begin."

"You are a brave lad, but do not decide hastily. There is an English steamer in the harbour which will depart in a few days."

A knock at the door announced a visitor. Bixio entered, and I took my leave, promising the General to come again next day.

Patsy and the others still promenaded the terrace, and, to judge by their laughter, a right merry time they were having. Of course I was greeted with a running fire of chaff concerning the interview with Garibaldi.

"I quite thought you were under arrest," observed Teddy.

"And probably sentenced to death," added Tarleton in sepulchral tones.

"You seem awfully cut up about it," I remarked.

"Ah!" exclaimed Teddy, "we were dissembling our grief! Our mirth was hollow! The ready laugh——"

"The *empty* laugh!"

"Drop it, you fellows! Let's hear what the meeting was about. Jimmy looks as pleased as Punch."

"Perhaps," Tarleton suggested, "he's been made Chief of the Staff."

"Or had his pay doubled."

"Well," observed Patsy, "that wouldn't bankrupt

the treasury. Two naughts are naught, if my arithmetic counts for anything."

"I say, you fellows, let's go down into the town and have a jolly little supper. I've had glorious news."

"But *we* haven't!" exclaimed Patsy.

"Well, you shall have. My guardian's out of prison and gone to England!"

Patsy's whoop of delight startled the crowd on the terrace, and every one glanced at us in astonishment.

"I don't know the gentleman personally," remarked Tarleton, "but that is no reason why we should miss the supper."

Teddy wanted to know if my credit was good.

"Ready-money customer!" said my chum. "Cash down's his principle. He's as rich as Croesus!"

"D'you mean it? Why didn't you tell us before? Come along!" and leaving the terrace and the beautiful gardens we entered the Via Toledo, a laughing, light-hearted party.

The supper was a big success, and afterwards I told my friends of Garibaldi's suggestion.

"Oh, I say! That would be downright shabby!" exclaimed Tarleton. "You are in the swim and you will have to go through with it."

"We've had the bitters," remarked Patsy. "We may as well taste some of the sweets."

Teddy clinched the matter. "You couldn't possibly withdraw now," he said with the solemnity of an owl; "*what would become of the expedition?*"

During the outburst of laughter following this sally I paid the reckoning, and we then sauntered down to the water's side, where the blue-jackets waited with the boat.

"Now we know you are respectable once more, we'll come again," said Teddy, stepping in.

"And shall have no objection to another supper!" added Tarleton.

That night I wrote a long letter to my guardian, congratulating him on his release, and telling him of my intention of going through with the campaign. Feeling pretty sure he would pay my mother a visit, I enclosed the letter in one to her, and, the next time Teddy came over, gave the packet to him.

Giovanni's information had taken a heavy weight from my mind, and, but for Carlo, I should have been comparatively happy. His extreme loyalty, daring character, and bitter opposition to Garibaldi made me fear lest he should be dragged into some desperate action. The prisoners were to return with the troops to Naples, but I felt certain that Carlo would soon be back at the front. Patsy suggested he should be clapped into prison and kept there till the campaign ended, but I did not think much of the idea. An event soon occurred which made me wish I had agreed to the plan.

The night before the evacuation began we were strolling rather listlessly through the town, wishing things would move a bit faster. Garibaldi, who as usual had been hard at work throughout the day, was returning to the Pavilion. Three or four of the Staff rode behind, and the populace ran at the side cheering vociferously. The whole crowd entered the narrow street we were in, and we squeezed against the wall to let them pass.

This particular street had suffered much from the bombardment. Several houses had been demolished,

some were unroofed, all were battered and pitted with shot-holes. Through one of these holes there suddenly peeped the muzzle of a pistol. The General was right in the line of fire. I shouted wildly, but the Chief did not hear, and in any case the warning would have been too late. There was a flash, a loud report, and a bullet whizzed across the street. The General had not moved a muscle, and was riding on smiling. The effect of the incident on the mob was extraordinary. Yelling savagely they rushed into the houses, their passions worked up to fever heat.

"Spy! Assassin! Pull him to pieces!"

The cries were appalling in their ferocity. Attended by his officers, Garibaldi rode into the crowd, endeavouring to pacify them. Patsy and I forced our way across. At the same moment the frenzied shouts broke out afresh. A man holding a still smoking pistol had been caught.

"Kill the Bourbon murderer!"

Garibaldi, hand on sword, spurred his horse into the struggling, confused mass which hid the prisoner. His eyes flashed, an angry frown crossed his forehead; in a voice that rose strong and clear above the howling of the multitude, he cried, "Set the man free!"

Never have I witnessed such a striking instance of natural sovereignty. Every raised hand dropped, every voice was dumb, the fiercest shrank back abashed; the man who had spoken was king and master. It was in such a crisis as this that one began to comprehend the magnitude of Garibaldi's power. At a sign from him we darted to the spot, the crowd giving way instinctively. The would-be murderer lay in a helpless heap. He was not dead, for as we raised him he moaned faintly.

"A shutter!" cried Garibaldi, and a shutter appeared as if by magic. Choosing four of the sturdiest fellows to carry the ghastly burden, we laid the victim to popular fury on it and set off before the General, Patsy and I being on either side of the wounded man.

Arrived at the Palace, we placed him in a side room and sent for a military surgeon, who shook his head hopelessly.

"I can do no good," he said. "They have killed him." Sirtori whispered to the doctor in a low voice.

"Possibly, but unlikely," replied the doctor, kneeling beside the dying man.

Then the General ordered the room to be cleared, only himself, Sirtori, and the surgeon remaining. Patsy seemed to be very much upset.

"The brutes!" he exclaimed hotly, "they aren't worth fighting for! Ugh! let's get away, Jimmy; I feel bad."

"The Chief showed up well."

"Oh, he's a brick! But the people! Did you see their faces? They were like ravening wolves, and, left to themselves, would have torn the chap limb from limb."

"I wonder who employed him?"

"That's what they're trying to find out, but I reckon he's too far gone to tell anything."

News of the attempt on the General's life had spread like wildfire, and very soon we were surrounded by a throng of excited Red Shirts, eager to learn the particulars. Some inquired if the fellow was likely to die; but, from their faces, I do not think the question was prompted by pure sympathy.

At last we broke away from the throng, and, reaching our quarters, remained there for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XII

LAST DAYS IN PALERMO

It was early morning, so early that Palermo still slept, when one of the Chief's aides wakened me.

"Dress quickly," said he. "The General wants to see you in the eastern gallery."

Slipping on my clothes I left the room, wondering vaguely what had happened.

Quite alone the General was pacing slowly up and down the gallery. The smile was absent from his face, which looked troubled.

"At your service, General," said I, bringing myself to the salute.

"Ah, it is you! I want you. The poor fellow is dead."

"The one who tried to shoot you, General?"

"The one who was paid to shoot me."

"Then you did discover something?" I asked.

"Yes, so much the worse!"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"The fool has paid for his folly; the knave must go free."

I stood in perplexity, not knowing what answer to make. The General held an open letter in his hand, and read aloud, "'My son is in Sicily fighting for the Bourbon. Should he fall into your hands, treat him kindly for his father's sake.'"

I remembered the words. They were taken from the letter of Carlo's father.

"The writer is one of us," observed the General. "We owe him much. I too have a son, and cannot break a father's heart."

My face flushed and paled alternately; I trembled like a leaf. What did the General mean? Was he referring to Carlo? Yes, his next words named him!

At that I smiled. "Impossible, General! You do not know him! On the battlefield he would kill you without remorse; but, Carlo Rugieri an assassin? Never! It is some dreadful mistake!"

His wondrous smile banished the gloom from the Chief's face. He laid his hand on my head caressingly.

"Good boy!" he exclaimed. "Always stand up for your friends, and never lose faith in human virtue. But in this case you are at fault. The proofs are plain—too plain. The wretched man, now dead himself, breathed the name; my spies did the rest. He saw your friend at the priest's house, received money from him, and came straight away to fulfil his evil mission. If Giovanni knew, 'twould break his heart."

"Is there no possibility of mistake? It sounds too horrible!"

"None, my boy. Every link in the chain is perfect. The young rascal ought to be shot as a warning to others, but for his father's sake I will let him go free. Perhaps the lesson will do him good. Tell him to slip down to the Marina at once, and get aboard one of the transports."

I saluted and turned away. Patsy, waiting for me at the end of the gallery, seized my arm.

"What's up, Jimmy?" he asked. "Seen a ghost, or had a wiggling? Has the old man been playing the heavy father? Why, you haven't a drop of blood in your face!"

"Take me where we can be alone for a few minutes."

Sitting down in one of the unoccupied rooms I told him the news, and was surprised to find he did not dream of questioning its truth.

"Look the matter straight in the face and you won't find much to astonish you in it," he said. "This young Rugieri is a Bourbon, heart and soul. He hates Garibaldi like poison, openly denounces him as a murderer, and looks upon him as the Prince of Darkness. Garibaldi is the one supreme enemy of his king, country, and church. Without the Liberator himself, this insurrection would fizzle out like a damp squib. Carlo knows that."

"Ah, yes," I interrupted; "but he is too brave, too straightforward to approve such a dastardly action."

My chum smiled. "Look here, old man," said he. "I don't want to seem rough, but are you looking at this matter squarely? The young fellow has always been friendly to you, got you out of an awkward scrape, and saved your life the other day. Aren't you likely to be a bit prejudiced in his favour? My opinion is that the General's right all through the piece. However, you'll easily learn. If your friend is guilty he'll bolt, and be glad of the chance."

"And if he is innocent?"

"He'll stand his ground and demand to have his character cleared."

"I didn't think of that. You've put new heart into me. If he does stay, I'll stand by him."

"Of course you will, though I don't think you'll have the chance!"

Leaving my chum I went on, greatly perplexed in my mind, to the priest's house. Carlo was dressed, and the very first glance at his face sent a shiver of doubt through my mind. He was white, his eyes were downcast, and he was obviously ill at ease.

"You have heard what has happened?" I said somewhat brusquely.

"I have heard what the people say."

"That an attempt has been made on Garibaldi's life?"

"And that the poor, blind, ignorant tool has been nearly torn to pieces by the patriots!"

It is odd what power lies in a chance word, a hasty look, a thoughtless and perhaps unintended gesture. I had come to Carlo in grief on his account; within five minutes we were drifting into antagonism. Either innocence or impudence would pull my old acquaintance through even this ordeal. It was evident, however, that he was much disturbed, and he avoided meeting my glance. As a boy I had learnt that the honest man is he who can look you straight in the face, and this I firmly believed till a London thief not only stole my purse, but looked me straight in the face at the same time. After that I began to have doubts. There certainly was now a restraint about Carlo's glances which I had not before noticed.

"The assassin is dead," I remarked coldly.

"One expects ferocity from a pack of wolves!"

"But he did not die in silence."

"The rack would probably make him speak."

"That is a gross insult to Garibaldi, but let it pass.

With almost his last breath the poor wretch gave his employer's name."

Carlo was evidently waiting for this, yet failed to repress a start, whether of relief or dismay I could not judge.

"Then you know all?" he cried.

I nodded in reply, not trusting myself to speak. He then asked me to tell him everything, which I did, concluding with the General's resolve to spare him for his father's sake.

"Garibaldi is generous; say I thank him."

"Then you are going, Carlo?" I cried in dismay, for to the very last I had hoped to hear him indignantly deny the charge.

"Going?" he cried. "Shall I stay to put a noose round my neck? What chance of acquittal would there be when even you think me guilty?"

"No, no, I believe in your innocence; but there are some things hard to understand."

Carlo laughed unpleasantly. "It is very good of you, though your words come from the heart only; the head spurns them. Yet I am thankful after a fashion. It is comforting to know one still has a friend. Well, I go back to Naples with the others, but one can fight as well there as here."

We passed from the house into the desolate street, and walked together to the Marina without speaking a word.

Then, turning to me, Carlo put out his hand. "It is free from blood," he said, "or I would not let you touch it. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Carlo."

He stepped into a boat, and was rowed to a transport while I stood watching him regretfully. Did I really believe in his innocence? Honestly, I am afraid

not. On my return to the Palace, Patsy laughed, even, at my doubts.

"Gone," said he, "of course! Very silly to have stayed! Look here, Jimmy, he doesn't take the same view of the matter as you do. He isn't built your way. What you call murder he calls patriotism."

"Very funny kind of patriotism!"

"To us, but not to him. However, don't let it bother you. Try to put it out of your head."

Good advice this, but the unpleasant incident was not so easily dismissed, and the remembrance of Carlo's downfall worried me for many a long day. Still, I did not pass all my time in regrets; indeed I had little leisure for brooding. Events began to move quickly in Palermo, while secret preparations were being made to strike the next blow. The proposed evacuation by the Royals was gradually carried out, until at length the last soldier disappeared, and the white flag of the two Sicilies was hauled down, never again to wave over Palermo.

Then General Medici landed with three thousand volunteers, being followed by Cosenz with fifteen hundred more, for whom lodgings and provisions had to be found. As for the General, he had barely time to breathe. From early morning till late at night he was busy directing, ordering, pacifying, commanding, and in everything his splendid humanity dwarfed all his other qualities. Orphans blessed him, grateful widows kissed the pommel of his saddle, the poor regarded him as a compassionate angel, and sang his praises.

He fixed his salary as Commander-in-Chief at the munificent sum of eight francs daily, but he had no need to carry a purse. His pockets were always empty.

The white face of a poor orphan, the wounds of a cripple, the mourning garb of a widow appealed to him instantly, and his general's pay disappeared as if by magic.

The hardships of his early life had stamped their influence indelibly on his character. He had small use for the tailor, could sleep on the ground as comfortably as in a bed, while bread, water, a little fruit, and half a cigar constituted a real banquet. That he did not love shams the people of Palermo soon discovered. Going straight to the heart of things, he brushed away make-believe and hollow pretence, reforming abuses, and trying to set affairs on a sound basis. He founded a military school in which the street arabs were collected and trained as soldiers, some of them doing good service under him long before the campaign ended.

As usual, several Englishmen had turned up to take part in the fighting, being attached to a Sicilian brigade organised by another Englishman, Colonel Dunne, with whom Patsy and I managed to spend more than one agreeable hour.

The time for further action fast approached. Messengers came and went, some by land, others by sea. The air was filled with rumours of a new and daring enterprise. Men in hospital, fearful of being left behind, begged the surgeons to certify them fit for duty. Every one talked of what was about to happen.

Towards the end of June Teddy Mackworth and his friend Tarleton came to pay us their final visit.

"I hear you're off in a day or two, so I thought I'd come to give you a little bit of good advice," said he, with his unparalleled impudence.

"Good boy," I murmured. "*So considerate!*"

"I should have thought you wanted all that for yourself!" remarked Patsy.

"Oh, he has plenty to spare," laughed Tarleton. "Every officer on board spends half his time giving Teddy good advice!"

"What a waste of energy!"

"Not at all!" said his chum. "He passes it on to his friends."

"Generosity's the family motto!" ejaculated Teddy. "What I have, I share!"

"Especially if it happens to be a wiggling from a senior!"

"Tarleton, you're a fraud and a traitor. I shall remove your name from my visiting list."

"But the advice, Teddy! It seems to hang fire."

"That's because you chaff a fellow so."

"Write it down and send it on by post," advised Patsy. "I'll supply the first aphorism: 'Little boys should be like the lightning flash—seen only for a short time: heard not at all!'"

"Patsy, your age alone protects you from my vengeance."

"To say nothing of his size!" added Tarleton.

In our walk we had approached Castellamare, and stood a moment to watch the crowds of natives, who, with pick and shovel, were demolishing the immense fortress which had caused them such misery.

"They don't mean to leave much of it standing," said the young midshipman. "There won't be one stone on another by the time they've finished."

"A good job, too. I should like to see St. Elmo at Naples come down in the same way. The world's getting too old for these secret prison-houses."

"A guilty conscience," remarked my chum. "He's afraid of being popped into St. Elmo himself if Garibaldi gets beaten!"

"No fear of that with Jimmy to back him up! As Admiral Munday said the other day, 'The expedition's bound to succeed, gentlemen. Jimmy Howard's there!'"

"And worth as much as Bill Adams at the battle of Waterloo!" Tarleton added.

"Thank goodness we're soon leaving Palermo! You two get on one's brain."

"That's better than water on the brain, anyhow!"

"I don't know so much about that," interrupted Patsy, laughing.

"Well, here we are, and here's your boat!" I exclaimed. "And now we must part."

"Yes," replied Teddy with an affectation of poignant grief—

"The best of friends must part,
The laughing eye grow dim,
But treasured in our secret heart,
Is the mem'ry of our Jim!"

"Take care of him, Tarleton!" I said imploringly, "and get the doctor to examine the poor fellow."

"See you at Naples, old chappy!" cried Teddy, stepping into the boat. "At least if the Royals don't pop you off by the way!"

Having said good-bye they pushed off, and Patsy and I returned to the Palace.

The excitement of the last few days was drawing to a head. The men were hard at work preparing for the march, and we learned that a large number would leave in the morning *en route* for Messina.

Türr was to penetrate the heart of the island, Bixio had orders to clear the southern coast, Medici the northern, and all were to meet at Messina.

The impedimenta were few. Each man carried a rifle, sixty rounds of ammunition, a water-bottle, and a haversack, which we knew from painful experience would generally be empty. Still, as Patsy remarked, it looked well to carry a haversack even if there was nothing in it.

To our great regret we were not attached to either of the three divisions, but we were consoled by the knowledge that the Chief himself remained behind.

"We aren't likely to lose much while with the Chief," said Patsy. "He won't be far away when the rumpus begins."

The troops made a pretty show; the Garibaldians and Sicilians in their red shirts, the Genoese in their blue uniforms, and Colonel Dunne's brigade, which had assembled to witness the start, dressed in the white uniforms of the beaten Bourbons. The men were in the highest spirits, looking on the march as a kind of holiday jaunt. They laughed and joked, cheered the leaders, and sang merry songs to while away the time of waiting.

A sudden resounding cheer announced the arrival of Garibaldi. Mounted on a magnificent horse, his eyes flashing, his face lit up by the marvellous magnetic smile, he rode slowly along the line. Then drawing rein in the centre he faced the men, delivering a short, stirring address, which went straight to their hearts. He called on them to clear the island of the enemy, and their answer was a wild outburst of cheering, which made the place ring again.

"As long as the Chief's with them, they'll dare anything," whispered Patsy when the noise subsided.

I agreed with him. It was a regular one-man enterprise, and had Garibaldi been killed at the storming of Palermo, the whole affair would have fallen through, though there was no lack of splendid leaders.

At length all was ready. The last word had been spoken, the last order issued. The bands struck up a lively tune, and, to the accompaniment of stirring music, the troops moved off the ground.

"To meet again at Messina!" cried Garibaldi to his generals, and the words were repeated by hundreds of lusty throats.

For the officers who remained in Palermo the next fortnight was a busy time. From dawn to dusk we were at work organising, inspecting, enrolling recruits from various European countries, and collecting ammunition.

One evening, after a hard day's work, my chum and I had just sat down to a well-earned supper, when the Chief sent for me. He looked harassed and full of care, but he smiled brightly as I entered.

"You are going to the front," said he. "General Medici is at Milazzo, or rather, near it. It is possible that Bosco, the Bourbon general, may try to bar his progress. If so, he will need more ammunition. The steamer *London* lies in the harbour, loaded. You will go in her. I have selected fifty of the foreign volunteers. They are under your command till you arrive at General Medici's camp."

"And my comrade, General?"

"Does he speak French?"

"Like a native!"

"Then he will be useful. He can go as your second."

"And we start?"

"At eight sharp. The men are in the barracks at the Castle. Be there half-an-hour before the time."

I saluted and withdrew, proud of the confidence placed in me.

"Well," said Patsy, "any more attempted murders?"

"No, my boy; but an extraordinary slice of good luck!"

"Worth spoiling your supper for?"

"Judge for yourself," and I told him all about it.

"Hurrah, that's capital! I was getting a wee bit tired of Palermo."

"We shall have a change now!"

"Well, hurry up with the eatables. We mustn't keep the steamer waiting."

"Nor the men! It's lucky we aren't as disreputable-looking as when we got here, or they wouldn't grow enthusiastic over their new leaders."

Patsy laughed. "No," said he, "dress makes a wonderful difference."

Quickly finishing the meal, we polished up our weapons, and, having made ourselves as smart as possible, walked down to the barracks with just the tiniest bit of excusable swagger, as Patsy remarked. That our positions were temporarily reversed did not trouble him in the least. He was as willing to serve under me, as I should have been to yield command to him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "B. L."

AT half-past seven to the second, Garibaldi, attended by a single aide, rode into the huge square where his chosen men were assembled.

"My lads," said he, "you, who of your own free will have offered your lives to the sacred cause of Italian independence, I have work for you. The war in Sicily will soon be over. We have already struck two blows, one at Calatafimi, one at Palermo; the third will be final. Your brave companions are on the spot; they will welcome you. Shoulder to shoulder you will advance with them, and the enemy will be crushed. Here are your officers; they will prove worthy of you, as you of them. I have seen them in the field and at the storming of the barricades. When the fight begins you will find them in the front where the bullets are."

"Praise from Sir Rupert," murmured Patsy, and our faces flushed with gratified pride. Indeed, to gain such praise from the rugged veteran many a man in those days would have gone to his death.

Of the volunteers some were English, some French, the rest were Italians from Piedmont. Youngsters for the most part, very few apparently being older than my chum, they yet looked a capable lot, strongly built, athletic, and full of enthusiasm. I was proud

of my command, and said so, which seemed to create a bond of sympathy between us.

The *London* lay at her moorings with steam up, and the instant the last man scrambled aboard, the steamer edged off. There was scarcely any accommodation, the vessel being literally packed with ammunition, but the men only laughed at discomforts, and sat where they could.

The *London* was manned by Englishmen even down to the stokers, and Captain Stanton, her skipper, was an ardent Garibaldian. At first, of course, he was far too busy for conversation, but once clear of the bay, he came to have a chat. In answer to my questions, he said the *London* would put us ashore and land the ammunition at Barcellona, a little place near Milazzo, where General Medici was supposed to be.

"Suppose we fall in with the enemy's fleet?" my chum asked.

The captain shook his head. He was a short spare man, dark complexioned, with sharp keen eyes and firm mouth.

"We must run for it," said he. "We aren't in fighting trim, though there's plenty of powder on board."

"Rather too much for a shell to drop amongst!"

"Yes. There'd be fireworks on a large scale. What d'you think of things on the island? Will the Royals fight?"

"They stood up well enough at Calatafimi!"

"Had you a hand in that?"

"Yes."

"Ah, they say you were pretty hard pressed at one time!"

A shout of laughter from a group of volunteers

interrupted the conversation, and, anxious to learn the cause of such merriment, I made my way carefully along the deck. Several men lying near a covered lantern were looking intently at something one of their number was doing. At my approach the laughter broke out afresh, and there arose a babel of voices, French, English, and Italian.

I could not at first understand what was going on; when I did I could scarcely refrain from joining in the merriment. It appears that my little band possessed a flag which did not altogether suit the tastes of the English members. The tricolour was all right for the foreigners, as they called the French and Italians, but where did their nation come in? A mixed band, they argued, should have a mixed flag, and the others had good-humouredly yielded the point. The result was now apparent; and, looking at it, I could barely keep my face straight. Patsy did not try to, but went off into peals of laughter.

The artist who had embellished the flag was plainly no copier of other men's designs; nor, by the way, did he stand on much ceremony with Dame Nature. Throwing aside the traditions of all schools, he had gone in wholly for originality, and had succeeded. On the white background in the centre of the flag appeared in a flaming yellow colour the picture of an unknown animal, "painted," as the artist remarked with obvious pride, "as it was drawn." Underneath was printed in capitals—"B. L." The artist himself had no misgivings, but the letters were placed there to enlighten the unfortunate beholders who had not been educated up to his style. They stood, as we learned after many distressing guesses, for "British Lion."

I have never met that particular species in the flesh, though his picture scores of times. But of all British lions this one in the mixed flag easily takes the palm. The animal was presumably a quadruped, since it had four legs, while some thick daubs of yellow paint represented the tawny mane. The fact that part of it lay on the ground is a detail. Then one began to realise the artist's wisdom in the insertion of the letters "B. L." Had I been asked my private opinion, I should have called the front legs arms; declaring the object to be the picture of a prize-fighter, only prize-fighters, I believe, do not wear their hair long.

However, there was really no need for speculation, as we had been told the meaning of the picture. It was, then, the British Lion, the oddest, most comical, yet fiercest-looking British Lion that any one ever dreamed of. It stood upright on its hind-legs, its fore-paws in a fighting attitude, and it glowered savagely at the spectator with one eye. The second optic, I regret to say, had met with misfortune, having been blocked up by a thick yellow paste. Otherwise, as the artist assured us, the creature's appearance would have been doubly ferocious.

Every one came to inspect the king of beasts, and great was the merriment afforded. Several of the Italians, under the impression that the fantastic creature was meant for the patron saint of England, regarded it with reverential awe. A Frenchman, anxious to be polite, insinuated that he had never seen a finer yellow; but the rude Britishers simply screamed and made unhandsome suggestions. One invited the artist to add boxing-gloves, another urged the addition of a tall hat, while yet a third proposed to adorn the

"B. L." with a short pipe. The inventor of the magnificent beast maintained his good temper, and made the best score of all.

"All right, boys," said he, "have your fun; but I'll tell you what, the enemy won't laugh a lot when they've seen the 'B. L.' at close quarters a time or two."

"Bravo!" I cried. "We'll do our best to make that boast good!"

Unhappily, before our mixed flag was unfurled we were in full retreat, steaming at high pressure away from a Neapolitan cruiser that had crept down upon us in the gathering shadows.

Captain Stanton had said truly we could not fight with a powder magazine beneath us; and our only hope of safety lay in flight.

So the "B. L." having been placed in a corner to dry, lights were put out, the noise was hushed, the men lay down quietly, only those of the sailors having work to do moved. This sensation of being chased at sea was a new one to me, and, with the chance of a random shot, I do not know that it was altogether agreeable.

"Number two!" I whispered, as a fresh set of lights appeared in the distance.

"Awkward for us if it is!" said Patsy.

The *London* stole on in the darkness, doubling like a hunted hare. The skipper might have got her away, but, having been sent to Barcellona, to Barcellona he meant going.

Thus it happened that daylight still found us flying from one cruiser, while we presently discovered that another had cut us off from our haven. Patsy and I, joining the captain on the bridge, held a council of

war. My independent command seemed likely to have a premature ending.

"One thing's certain," said the skipper with breezy cheerfulness, "we can't get into port."

"Then we'll have to turn back."

"That's just the question. If we hold on a while longer the ship behind will snap us up."

"Then why not run for it at once?"

"Because this ammunition has to go ashore somewhere hereabout. General Medici wants it badly."

"Couldn't you run the ship aground?"

The skipper slapped his thigh and chuckled.

"Well now," said he, "come to think of it, that ought to be easy enough! D'you see that white bank ahead like a heap of soap-suds? That's water churned up by rocks. We've only to get into the middle of that stuff to be safe from all the cruisers afloat; but I doubt if the general would get his powder!"

"There might be a passage!"

"There might; but I don't know of it."

"Perhaps some of the volunteers have been to sea."

There seemed to be something in this idea of Patsy's, and, stepping down from the bridge, I asked if any one knew the coast.

A short, broad-shouldered, swarthy young fellow came to the front.

"I am a fisherman," said he, "and have been in these parts often."

"Come with me," I said, and led him to the skipper.

"Well, my lad," exclaimed Captain Stanton, "do you see that cruiser yonder? she has cut us off from the harbour."

The Italian saluted.

"We're in a trap, and must either be snapped up by the Neapolitans or be dashed to pieces on these rocks. If you can get us out of this hole 'twill be a good thing for the cause."

"There is a passage, signor; but it is frightfully dangerous."

"Can you get us through?"

"I will try, but will not be responsible if the ship goes to pieces."

The skipper cast a look at our two pursuers, and another at his trim little vessel.

"Poor old girl!" said he affectionately. "Well, we shall have to risk it. Now, my lad, take her in charge!"

To the amazement of the enemy the *London* made straight for the cruel rocks, while we stood silently watching with eager eyes as the interval of safety gradually decreased. Hissing and seething, the white waves swept over the rocks, or dashed into foam against their rugged sides. A moment's irresolution, a hand's-breadth to right or left, and we should be flung into that boiling cauldron. The excitement was intense. Many faces blanched, but no man moved from his place or showed any other sign of fear. Once only there arose an eager exclamation, and that was when the narrow opening appeared in sight. Would the good ship win through? I looked at the skipper's face, but it was as expressionless as a mask.

Slowly, very slowly the *London* forced a passage, while the mad waves, shrieking as if in despair at missing their prey, threw up dense columns of foam on either side of us.

Following at a distance the cruisers fired as if in

desperation, but their shots fell short, and it was too dangerous to approach much nearer.

Crash! crunch! There was a dull grating sound, and the *London*, with her engines reversed, had grounded on a broad flat rock close to the shore. Without a trace of emotion the skipper immediately gave his orders, the crew flew about their work, the boats were swung out, and the volunteers proceeded with the task of unloading the ship.

Selecting an Italian sergeant, I despatched him to find the general and acquaint him of our arrival. Then Patsy and I set to work with the rest, tugging, straining, pulling like niggers, while the Neapolitans, standing in as closely as they dared, discharged their guns repeatedly.

"Fire away!" cried Patsy. "It's splendid practice!"

Presently a body of riflemen came down to the shore, and were followed by a dozen carts, into which the men hoisted the barrels of powder and cases of cartridges. For several hours we worked with might and main, till, just as evening fell, we had the satisfaction of getting the last package ashore.

Captain Stanton cheerfully wished us farewell. The *London* had miraculously escaped serious damage, and he had great hopes of getting her off again. With this idea in view he borrowed the fisherman who had piloted us through the dangerous passage, promising to set him ashore at Barcellona.

General Medici had stationed his forces on the high ground between Meri and Pace, about three miles from Milazzo. The main body occupied the villages, while the outposts were on the wooded slopes looking towards the town. The general himself was at Meri, and

thither, preceded by the riflemen, I marched my tired detachment. Medici received me with the greatest kindness, expressing his gratification at the arrival of the ammunition, and saying he should find work for my men. Meanwhile he directed us to remain in the village, and very glad we were to get a long night's rest.

The morning of the next day passed idly, but towards evening we were ordered to cross the river San Lucia, where we were joined by the general himself. The object of the movement soon became apparent. On a high ridge of ground near to San Pietro stood a solitary house; one of the advanced outposts of the enemy. Pointing it out, General Medici said, "There, my lads, is your first piece of work. We must get that building and keep it. I entrust both tasks to you. From what I have heard of your leaders I do not think you will fail me."

The men answered by a low hum of approval; they were delighted at this mark of confidence.

Turning to me, he added, "You will advance at nine o'clock. If you can get close up without being seen, a determined rush will do it. A detachment will move from Carriola in support, at the same time, but I do not anticipate you will need much help."

We lay down, waiting impatiently for the moment to advance. The men talked in whispers, and every owner of a watch looked at it repeatedly. I placed mine on the ground with the case open, and anxiously counted the minutes. Slowly the evening crept on; it grew dusk; we could now barely discern the patch of grayish-white representing our goal.

At eight o'clock I sent Patsy forward with half-a-dozen men to reconnoitre, and to find the easiest route.

At ten minutes to nine he returned alone, having posted his men within a short distance of the house.

"Nothing could be simpler," said he. "The ground's wooded right to the foot of the last slope. There's just a chance of reaching the house without being discovered."

This was good news, and I instantly ordered the men to fall in. Led by Patsy, we moved forward as noiselessly as possible over the uneven ground.

Suddenly the silence was broken by sounds of rapid firing on our right, towards Carriola, as if the Royals were making a counter attack. This increased our danger, as the garrison of the villa would be on the alert; but we pushed on steadily. At the bottom of the last slope I halted the men in the wooded ground. Lights burned in the building, showing that the enemy were wide awake.

I began to see more clearly that we were bound on a desperate venture, which might end disastrously. Bidding the men maintain perfect silence, I ordered them to move up the slope on hands and knees, hoping in this way to cover a portion of the ground without being detected. Patsy and I went first, closely followed by the originator of the "B. L.," who intended to display the fruits of his genius on the house-top. He was a chubby-faced, rosy-cheeked lad, a type of scores who can be seen in almost any English village. His name was Tom Barton, and his unvarying good humour made him a great favourite with his comrades.

The fusillade still continued on our right, and as we emerged from the dip Patsy drew my attention to the dusky forms thrown into relief by the lights from the villa. By this time I knew we had only ourselves to

depend on. The troops intended for our support were separated from us by the Royals; were, indeed, as we afterwards learned, engaged in furious strife with them.

We had advanced thirty yards up the slope, and I was congratulating myself on our success, when a shot, succeeded by a scattering volley, proclaimed that we were discovered. At once the men leaped to their feet and cheered.

"Don't stop to fire!" I shouted. "Come on! *Viva Garibaldi!*"

Tom Barton unfurled his flag, and away we all raced.

The Royals fired again and again. Their bullets came pattering down as thick as hail, but the darkness and ever-shifting range preserved us. Here and there a man fell, but the rest never faltered, and we reached the walls surrounding the villa at a rush.

I marvelled much how he managed it, but Tommy Barton was the first over, and I heard him shouting, "To the flag!"

To the flag we went, scrambling on the wall, leaping down, going ever forward. The Royals tried to fire again, but we were on them with the steel, and back they hurried, seeking the shelter of the house.

They were too late. Reaching the door together, we surged through. The "B. L." was well to the front, and the Englishmen closed round it.

"Bravo, Tommy!"

"We're coming, my boy!"

"Follow the flag!"

"Put it on the roof!"

"Hurrah, there they go!"

"The place is ours!"

The partial surprise, the fierce rush, had disconcerted

the Bourbons, who, retreating rapidly, made their escape in the best way they could, some leaping through the windows, others breaking open the doors. About a score shut themselves up in the top room, but a promise of quarter brought them out, and they laid down their weapons. Embarrassed by these prisoners, I was compelled to bind their arms and place them under a guard in one of the cellars.

"Your lives are in your own hands," I said. "Give no trouble and you are safe. Try to escape and the guard will shoot you down."

Meanwhile Tommy, mounting to the roof amidst the cheers of his comrades, had fixed the flag where it fluttered in the night breeze.

Thus far the enterprise had succeeded admirably, and while the enemy still fled, I sent some of the men to bring in their wounded companions. Out of my original number I had still forty fit for duty, and these at once began to put the villa in a state of defence.

CHAPTER XIV

BURNT OUT

My chum and I agreed that it was impossible to hold the garden for any length of time.

"Strengthen the house and run up barricades," Patsy advised.

This was a sensible proposal, the more especially as the building had been loopholed for musketry.

One thing, however, troubled me—the splendid cover the wall would afford the enemy once they reached its shelter. Feeling sure they would return, we worked with feverish haste, strengthening a weak spot here, repairing a defence there, expecting every moment to hear the music of the Bourbon guns. Gradually the sounds of firing on our right died away and all became still.

Sending four men, including Barton, to the flat roof to keep watch, I took half the remainder into the garden. Unfortunately the wall was not loopholed; but, finding some breaches and making others, we placed ourselves in a position to give the enemy a warm reception.

"Remember, my lads," I said, "no bayonet-fighting. A volley or two at short range and then back to the house."

I had no intention of wasting their lives in a struggle out in the open.

It was an eerie job waiting there in the darkness,

straining our ears, expecting every moment to hear the whistle of the bullets. Twice I crept cautiously to the top of the wall, but nothing could be seen, and not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

Did the Royals really intend to let us remain unmolested? I hardly thought so, yet it was strange they did not attack at once; daylight would add points in our favour.

Midnight came and went without bringing a sign of the foe. I went into the house to see that everything was ready there.

"They'll come with the dawn," said my chum confidently, "expecting to catch us off guard; but we can hold out unless they bring along a heavy gun or two. Fortunately, they left plenty to eat behind."

"I'd forgotten about the food."

"The men didn't, though; they've been rummaging all over the place. There's enough to last for a week."

"That's all right. Now I must go out again."

As Patsy foretold, the Bourbons returned with the dawn. Tommy Barton was the first to descry them as they issued from the woods in the gray of the morning, and word was immediately sent down. As far as I could judge, they were about a hundred strong, and came on in a compact body with a long swinging step. Half-way up the slope they broke into a run, seeking the shelter of the wall.

My fellows stood steady at their appointed stations, each man with a finger on the trigger of his rifle; but thus far not a shot was fired. Encouraged by the silence, the Royals advanced briskly. Another thirty yards would do the trick, when, with a simultaneous report, every rifle that could be brought to bear was

discharged. The rush was stayed. Cries of surprise and pain rose from the broken crowd, and the survivors ran hurriedly down the hillside.

The light was far stronger when they came the second time, and we could see their figures clearly. An old officer led them with magnificent courage. Quite a dozen yards in advance he ran, waving his sword and urging his men to the attack. Again the deadly rifles blazed out, but this time the stormers did not halt. Inspired by the example of their heroic chief they rushed on. Firing a last volley we retired to the house, where, with several others, I joined Barton on the roof.

From their shelter the enemy maintained a smart fire, wounding two of our men, and making it dangerous for us to show ourselves. Tommy tried the old dodge of raising his cap on his rifle above the parapet. In an instant it was riddled by a dozen bullets. "Good job my head wasn't inside it," he said with his good-humoured laugh.

Whizz! whizz! the bullets sped; the firing became terrific, and under its cover a part of the stormers endeavoured to scale the wall.

A loud cheer proclaimed the success of the leader, but the gallant veteran, falling back wounded, hardly held his ground a second. Discouraged by this loss the others gave way, and very soon were scudding down the slope as fast as their legs could go. A final volley hastened their flight, and we cheered enthusiastically as the last man disappeared in the woods, leaving only the dead and badly wounded on the open ground.

To relieve the sufferings of the latter was now my

chief desire, and Patsy went with a flag of truce to give the enemy an opportunity of removing their injured comrades. The officer in command gladly accepted the proposal, and very shortly men with improvised stretchers came to carry off the bodies of those who had fallen in the fray. Our own wounded were very few in number, while no one was hurt seriously: for which we were thankful.

Directly the Royals retreated I had sent a messenger to General Medici with the news of our success; now I ordered food to be served out, and, having posted a number of sentries, told the rest of the men they had better snatch a little sleep. I was too excited to rest, and with Patsy climbed to the roof, whence we could obtain a view of the surrounding country. Several of the Englishmen who were still awake laughed heartily when we stopped to look at our strange flag.

"Well, cap'en," said the artist, with that delightful freedom so characteristic of our volunteers, "I reckon the enemy didn't laugh much after all, when they caught sight of the 'B. L.'"

"No," I replied, smiling. "They were much too alarmed!"

I had no intention of conveying a double meaning, but the men took it up, greeting my remark with a roar of laughter.

"Well," said Tommy, "they ran away fast enough, anyhow!"

"And that's the main thing, my lad!" said Patsy. "With a flag like that, and you for a standard-bearer, we could sweep Italy!"

Leaving the men, some smoking and chatting, others dropping off to sleep, we crossed to the parapet and

looked over. The Royals had retired out of sight, the sun shone, the day was beautifully fine. All around appeared so peaceful it was hard to believe we had just been fighting for our lives.

"Look here, Jimmy," said Patsy after a while, "you'd better have a nap. Those chaps won't bother us again for a bit, and we shall have to keep our eyes open to-night. Lie down, and I'll see to things meanwhile."

Until the enemy made a fresh assault there was really nothing to be done, so, taking my comrade's advice, I lay down and soon fell asleep.

During the afternoon my messenger returned from Meri, bringing the general's congratulations and an order to hold the house at all hazards for another twenty-four hours. The man had picked up some information concerning the fighting on the previous night, while he had also heard a rumour that Garibaldi had landed at Barcellona.

"If that's so," observed Patsy, "things will begin to move. The Chief doesn't waste much time over strategy!"

"No; his aim generally is to meet the enemy, smash him and rush on; but this Bosco seems a fairly tough customer."

"Well, we've only to beat him, storm Messina, and the island's free!"

"And then *en route* for Naples!"

"Perhaps so; but I don't exactly see how."

"Never mind; leave that for the general."

Afternoon merged into evening, the shadows began to fall, and still the Royals had not returned.

Assembling my men, I delivered General Medici's

order, telling them also that, happen what might, I would not abandon the position. The brave fellows responded by a rousing cheer. They were in splendid spirits, flushed by recent success, thoroughly rested, and eager to justify the general's confidence. Whether they would do so or not remained to be seen.

As the enemy were unlikely to make another attack in the same place, I resolved to keep all my men in the house and on the roof this time, since it was impossible to defend every approach to the garden.

Hours passed, twilight was swallowed up in darkness, the surrounding objects were blotted out. We could only listen, with straining ears, for the approach of the enemy. Would they come? Lying beneath the parapet I struck a light and looked at my watch; it wanted five minutes to midnight. A fierce rush by determined men might now prove successful; we could only fire at random. Getting up I crossed to the other side, where Tommy Barton touched my arm.

"Cap'en," he whispered, "it sounds to me as if the beggars are down there. Going to rush us, perhaps, from that side."

I could hear nothing and said so, but Tommy stuck to his opinion.

"Just let me go down, cap'en," said he, "I'll soon find out; there's no danger."

To this, however, I would not consent, and, before he could speak again, the Royals themselves told us what we wished to know. A stinging volley of bullets, a wild cheering, a heavy crash at the barricaded doors announced that the enemy were in the grounds of the villa. The house was surrounded, and it sounded as if the doors were being smashed with battering-rams.

The Englishmen on the roof and the men at the loopholes fired again into the crowd, but the assailants would not budge.

In the midst of the confusion a fierce yell of triumph and exultation arose: a second party had forced an entrance at the back.

Calling on my men to follow I scrambled from the roof into the upper chamber, and thence on to the broad staircase. Down we went, caught the exultant Royals, sent them flying along the passage, and hurled them into the grounds. Their comrades, having succeeded meanwhile in smashing the main door, came pouring through. The fight was now one of hand-to-hand grip, in which the assailants had the advantage of numbers. To and fro we surged and swayed, while steel clashed and men fought hotly in a life and death struggle. What the result would have been had no accident occurred I cannot say, but suddenly the scene was illumined by a red flame: the house was on fire!

The place burned like touchwood, threatening to engulf everything and everybody in one vast conflagration.

"Back! back!" screamed the Royals hoarsely, and as they fled our men quickly followed, continuing the fight in the gardens.

The issue yet trembled in the balance when I remembered the men in the cellars. In an instant I rushed into the burning house. Win or lose I could not leave those unhappy wretches to perish by a horrible death. Early in the fight, the guard, leaving one of their number behind, had run to the assistance of their comrades. Down the steps I dashed headlong, burst the door, and entered the cellar. The

sentry, a mere lad, stood calmly at his post; the prisoners were in a state of frenzied excitement.

"Quick!" cried I, "cut their bonds! The house is on fire! Get out, my men, and be off to your own camp!"

Whipping out his knife, the sentry began to cut the ropes. I started at the farther end of the line, and as each man felt himself free he soon showed a clean pair of heels.

By the time we had finished the place was full of smoke, and the crackle of flames could be distinctly heard overhead. The sentry made a dash for the steps, I followed, and an instant later we both stood in the hall. Casting a hasty glance at the burning building, I was horrified to see a man in the stairway. For a moment he stood upright, then losing his balance, fell with a thud to the bottom. Running across, I pulled him into the passage; it was Tommy Barton. The poor fellow was badly scorched but not dead, since he muttered some incoherent words as I dragged him into the garden.

Here, during my absence, the fight had ceased, and Patsy was inquiring anxiously for me. We could see each other now by the lurid glare of the fire, and the men cheered lustily as I came into view.

"We've cleared 'em out," cried Patsy. "They're off down the hill. Where have you been?"

"To set the prisoners free!"

"Poor fellows!" he cried, "I'd quite forgotten them! What a mercy you remembered!"

"And here's Tommy Barton; I found him inside, too."

"Been for the flag, cap'en, I'll be bound," said one of the Englishmen.

"Nonsense! He'd never have been so crazy!"

Yet that is just what he had done, for we found the old rag wrapped round him. It had not altogether escaped uninjured, but, strangely enough, Tommy's masterpiece, the "B. L.," remained perfect.

As it was utterly useless to think of saving the villa, I withdrew the men to the further end of the grounds, where we set about making the wounded comfortable. As far as we knew no one now remained in the burning house, but my little band had suffered somewhat severely in the hot fight, and six at least had paid the price of victory with their lives. About a dozen had been hit, some badly, and these were at once seen to by the soldier-surgeons who formed part of my detachment. Surgeons, or more strictly speaking medical students, were numerous among Garibaldi's volunteers.

"We're bound to be killed somehow," remarked Patsy. "If the other party only begin the work these fellows will finish it!"

"Who goes there? Halt, or I fire!"

"Where is Captain Howard? Take hold of my horse's head, somebody? Can't you see the poor brute's frightened to death?"

"Messenger from Medici," I remarked to my chum.

"Come to see about the beacon. They think it's a signal of distress!"

Our surmise turned out to be correct. The stranger was on the general's staff, and had ridden hard to find out what was happening.

"Tell the general the villa's burned to the ground," I said, "but we have driven the enemy back."

"Do you want help?"

"Not at present."

"Well, you're to stay here till the morning. There will be a big fight. The Chief has come!"

"Garibaldi here?"

"Came to Barcellona by steamer an hour or two ago, and is making arrangements to drive Bosco out of Milazzo."

On giving the news to my men they raised a cheer that might have been heard at the castle.

Promising to send the ambulance for my wounded, the messenger remounted, wished us farewell, and galloped off in a tremendous hurry; the horse, thoroughly frightened by the flames, bounding and leaping like a mad thing.

"That fellow rides well," remarked Patsy. "Hullo! what's going on there?"

The Englishmen had gathered in a group, and we found that Tommy Barton, having regained consciousness, was telling in broken sentences how he had saved the famous flag. When the fire broke out he was fighting beside me in the hall, but directly the rush began he ran back, darted up the broad staircase, squeezed through the trap-door, and, reaching the roof, seized the flag.

To tear it from the pole was the work of a moment, then wrapping it round his body, he once more made for the stairs. By this time the flames had increased in volume, the smoke was blinding, the heat terrific, but Tommy, intent on preserving the "B. L.," had plunged without hesitation into the fiery crater. The flag was too precious to be lost.

Going over to the group, Patsy and I congratulated the poor fellow on his daring. His eyes brightened,

and with a smile he said simply : " We mustn't let the enemy have our new flag, cap'en ! "

" Not likely ! We'll put it on a fresh staff and carry it into Milazzo soon."

" Wish I could carry it myself ! "

" Never mind, Tommy," broke in a chum, " I'll keep the old griffin going for a day or two till you're fit."

Leaving the sick man with his friends, we went the round of the sentries, Patsy making a little excursion to hunt up the Royals, who had, however, vanished.

Presently the ambulance came to fetch the wounded, and General Medici, with great thoughtfulness, sent us a few biscuits, which I distributed amongst my men. The medical officer confirmed the report of Garibaldi's arrival and also of the expected attack.

" You startled the camp with your bonfire," said he, laughing. " There hasn't been much sleep down yonder since."

" We've had none," said Patsy, " and that's worse."

The surgeon, a cheery sort of fellow, smiled, and having fixed up the injured in comparative comfort, took them to the temporary hospital.

By daylight the fire, which had burned fiercely, was dying out, and the gray dawn revealed a melancholy scene. The ruin was complete. Not a particle of anything but the bare stones remained standing, and they only enclosed a heap of charred rubbish.

" There's nothing like a fire to make a clean sweep of things," I was saying, when a loud cheer causing me to turn round, I saw the Chief himself, attended by three or four officers, riding towards us.

He was evidently in good humour, and, returning our salute by a wave of the hand, he cried, " Well

done, my lads! Well done! I said you would soon distinguish yourselves, and you have. Well, you'll have another opportunity soon. We're going to turn Bosco out of Milazzo. His men are good fighters, but you're better! What's that flag, Captain Howard?"

I had the scarred rag brought forward, and explained its origin.

"It's been in the flames!"

"Yes, General, so has the man who carried it," and I related the story of Tommy's daring feat.

"Where is the brave fellow?" cried the Chief. "Ah, that is the sort of man I love!"

"In hospital, General; but he will soon be at the front again."

"When he comes let me know; I will thank him myself," and, as the Chief rode forward, we cheered him to the echo.

"No wonder he has such influence over the Italians, when he makes us cold-blooded Northerners so excited!" remarked Patsy, and indeed the more we came into contact with Garibaldi the less surprised we were at his startling successes.

In half-an-hour's time we saw the group of horse, riding back toward Meri, and wondered when and how the battle would begin. It was at least certain that Bosco, the Bourbon general, meant fighting. He had a splendid position, his men were well armed and well trained, and from personal experience we knew that, properly led, they would attempt desperate things. However, as Patsy said, it was none of our business; we had only to obey orders.

CHAPTER XV

THE "B. L." GOES TO THE FRONT

A COUPLE of biscuits and a drink of water formed each man's breakfast that morning, and, the meal being finished, we waited impatiently for the opening of the day's proceedings.

General Bosco's position was well chosen. At his back lay the town and fortress of Milazzo, situated on the neck of a rocky promontory some four miles long. The district around us was one of wooded slopes, of cultivated fields, of walled gardens; and the warm purplish tints of the setting sun, falling on the vivid green, produced a fine effect. Close at hand the blackened ruins of the burnt villa made a decided blot on the beauty of the scenery.

It was just seven o'clock by my watch when we heard the sounds of musketry fire on our right.

"There's the opening bar of the day's music!" said my chum.

"It seems a long way off."

"They're firing on our left, too."

"Here come the sharpshooters of the centre. It's to be an attack in force all along the line."

"That's so, and when we've pushed Bosco back on to his peninsula the road to Messina will be open."

The sharpshooters passed on, the main body advanced, the firing on the right and left seemed farther

away. Apparently the whole army, with the exception of my detachment, had swept to the front. Of course the few Englishmen in my command grumbled furiously.

"Tommy needn't have worried about his flag!" said the temporary standard-bearer. "He might as well have put it in a tin box!"

"Guess the old man's clean forgotten us," remarked another man—"somebody's getting it hot down there; listen!"

"It's all right. The bullets don't hit anything."

"I reckon the 'B. L.' won't show very far in front to-day!"

"Oh, it's enough to make a fellow bad! The old man might as well put us to mind the baggage!"

There was a general laugh at this remark, and some one asked where the baggage was kept.

As the firing now grew fiercer, and the sounds of the deadly fight came floating back to us, the men's disgust deepened. Had they all been English I could not have kept them in hand, but their comrades acted as a check. These others were just as keen, perhaps more so, to join in the fray, but so great was their faith in Garibaldi that they never dreamed of questioning his decisions. The General knew best, they said; he would find us something to do.

As Patsy had remarked, the attack was made all along the line, but it seemed to have failed. Wounded men staggering to the rear told us the Neapolitans were fighting everywhere like demons. Our right had been pushed back, the centre made little headway, the left was at a standstill. Bosco and his riflemen were holding their ground grimly. Drawn up in ranks, we stood awaiting the order to advance.

Suddenly a horseman tore up; his horse's flanks were covered with foam.

"Bring your company on at the double!" cried he. "We are hard pushed in front, and need every available man."

The fellows cheered excitedly. Some one cried "Up with the 'B. L.!' " and poor Tommy Barton's masterpiece fluttered defiantly above our heads.

No need for urging on; rather a necessity for keeping back. Running lightly down a slope we scrambled through a wood, jumped across or into a broad dyke, and found ourselves in a cultivated but well-trampled field. The battle's tumult increased in volume as we raced along. To the right, to the left, in front of us rose the thunder of guns, the patter of musketry, the furious cries of struggling men. It was plain that in one quarter, at least, we were within an ace of being beaten. Here and there we passed a Red Shirt, quiet in death or badly wounded; while from various quarters parties of reserves were hurrying to the weak spot in our position.

Riding ahead, the mounted officer showed the way. We followed shoulder to shoulder under the smoke-grimed folds of the tattered "B. L." I felt a passing regret that Tommy was not there to carry it.

Jumping dykes, tearing down hedges, over the fields we ran, in full view now of part of the fight.

"Looks nice!" said Patsy, catching his breath.

The Garibaldians had evidently suffered a serious check, and were awaiting reinforcements. Officers were reforming their companies, General Medici sat his horse grimly, the ground in front was strewn with the bodies of the fallen.

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The Neapolitans — picked riflemen, and in overwhelming numbers — were strongly entrenched, the front of their position being defended by a stone wall.

I could not see what was happening elsewhere; but, from the direction of the firing, it appeared we had gained little ground either on the right or left. Plainly the battle had still to be won!

Our strange flag created some amusement, and the soldiers cheered good-humouredly as we approached.

"Let 'em laugh!" said the standard-bearer. "They'll find it's no laughing matter to keep pace with it!"

Meanwhile fresh men had come up, the officers took their places, a bugle rang out, and we advanced into the open.

Ping! Ping! Whizz! Whizz! The enemy were on the alert. The quick march broke into the double again, the double into a hot race, as the bullets poured into our midst.

Straight and true the enemy aimed. Men fell everywhere. Some stopped to return the fire, but that was only waste of ammunition; steel alone would drive the Neapolitans from their stronghold.

The "Mixtures," as Patsy irreverently christened my company, behaved splendidly. Not a man faltered, and the "B. L." was well to the fore.

A terrific fusillade, which killed many officers, threw the men on our right into temporary confusion, but we did not stay for them to recover. Formation was lost; the great thing for every one being to get shelter somewhere from that stinging fire. And the only shelter was to be obtained by turning the riflemen out!

The nearer we approached, of course the greater our losses, and the cries of the wounded became frequent.

The fellows immediately on our right suffered the worst. Most of the officers there were down, the wounded were numerous, the survivors appeared to lose heart.

A strange officer, one of Medici's Staff, I think, dashed to the front with a cheer. A bold, daring, young fellow he was, mounted on a magnificent black horse. He led them ten yards perhaps, when, a bullet striking him full in the chest, he rolled over with a cry of "Garibaldi!" on his lips.

This incident occurred close to me; but, doubtless, there were many similar tragedies which I did not see. Now we were close to the wall. To go backward or forward seemed alike. Death was busy everywhere.

Thus far the bullets had spared me, and, waving my sword, I called on the men to follow.

"Come on, Mixtures!" cried Patsy, who, as he remarked, had only been wounded once by a bullet through his hat, "we're the boys to get over a stone wall!"

"Make way for the flag!" shouted Tommy's chum, and my fellows cheered like mad as the "B. L." went to the front.

That was the supreme moment. The riflemen dealt out one last dose of iron, and then we were at the foot of the wall trying to scramble up. The height was not great; but the riflemen used their bayonets freely, fighting us steel-point to steel-point.

The check, however, lasted barely a minute when we were up and over, the wonderful flag flying ahead. Suddenly the bearer dropped, mortally wounded. The poor fellow was close to me, and smiled feebly into my face.

"Tell Tommy his old griffin had a good innings, sir," said he, as I caught the falling flag. I pressed



"Waving my sword, I called on the men to follow."—Page 192

his hand sorrowfully. The downfall of the "B. L." had disconcerted the "Mixtures," and for a moment we received another check. The sight of the flag, however, produced an outburst of cheering, the "Mixtures" pushed on in frantic haste, the riflemen fell back, beaten but still fighting stubbornly. Presently, in obedience to orders, they retreated rapidly, my handful dashing after them.

The heat of the fight, the intoxication of success, carried us away. We did not stop for orders, gave no thought to anything save pursuit. Over the field we dashed, the riflemen now running fast, and the "B. L." dancing in the sunlight.

That last wild charge had broken the centre, and Bosco was hurriedly withdrawing his soldiers to fresh positions. After them we went at full speed, till, on the summit of a slight hill, an aide pulled us up.

"The General has sent to say 'Well done!'" he exclaimed, "and he wishes you to hold your present position."

A glance at the field of battle considerably astonished me. In the excitement we had far outdistanced the main body, and were practically alone. Planting the flag on the mound, I ordered the men to seek the shelter of the surrounding scrub, as the heat was extreme. Patsy and I walked a few paces in advance to observe what was happening. By this time our right had swung round, doubling up the Neapolitan left. Toward the tongue of the peninsula, however, the enemy still held the advantage, nor could I discern any sign of their giving way.

"Making a good fight of it," said my chum. "We shall have to take the 'B. L.' over after all!"

This was of course a joke, yet, oddly enough, in less than ten minutes the "banner with the strange device" was leading us at racing speed towards the very spot. It happened in this way. Our view was naturally limited by the undulating ground, and for the most part we could only guess at the progress of the fight by the direction of the firing and the rising puffs of smoke. Quite suddenly we saw beneath us, but some distance in front, two or three mounted Red Shirts in the middle of a field of prickly pears. How they got there we did not know, nor did it matter much.

"Risky!" exclaimed Patsy, in the terse manner he sometimes affected. "Cavalry charge or dose of grape—domino!"

I had been looking intently at the group, and now, turning round, exclaimed, "Why, it's Garibaldi himself!"

"Thought I recognised the horse! I hope the old man won't get into too tight a corner; 'twould be all up with the expedition if he did!"

Before he finished speaking I had picked up the banner, and, calling to the men to follow, was racing like a madman towards the field. Between the trees on the upland above I had caught the sheen of steel, and recognised the helmets of the Neapolitan dragoons. The "Mixtures" had seen them also, and fully realised the gravity of the situation. Garibaldi was the heart and brain of the expedition; with his death or capture it would collapse like a pricked bubble.

Whether the dragoons found themselves there by design or accident, they were quick to take advantage of the fine opportunity. We saw them grip their sabres tightly, quicken their pace, and dash toward

the isolated group. There was no time to advance in any kind of order. To be of use we must strike at once and chance everything. Fortunately we were all young, strong, and in grand condition. Straining every nerve we ran rapidly forward, when, to our dismay, the Royalist horsemen broke from the wood and rode quickly down the slope. A wail of disappointment rose from our little band: we should be too late!

Faster and faster we ran, the first dozen in a compact body, the others tailing off, but all moving at their highest speed. An Italian near me groaned: the dragoons were in the field! The sight maddened him. Putting on a tremendous spurt, he raced ahead about fifty yards and toppled over exhausted.

"It's the pace that kills," gasped Patsy.

Meanwhile the crisis was fast approaching. Cutting Garibaldi off from his escort, the dragoons had surrounded him. The drama unfolded itself before our eyes. There seemed to be a little pause, then the Chief's sword flashed in the sunlight and a horseman went down. At the same time, Missori, Chief of the Staff, broke through the dragoons and a pistol-shot rang out.

We were at the edge of the field: three minutes and we should be there! Pausing a second or two on the edge of the dyke to catch our breath, we dashed across the field like bolts from a crossbow.

"Garibaldi!" "*Viva Garibaldi!*" "*Hurrah!*" "Go it, my boy!" "Keep it up, old man!"

Such were the exclamations that burst from us as we sprang like wild cats at the dragoons. Missori and the Chief had accounted for three or four; our rush demoralised the rest. Attracted by the noise, a body of

Red Shirts hurried up. There was a sharp, fierce tussle, bayonet met sword, the dragoons were utterly routed.

Throwing our caps in the air, we shouted ourselves hoarse, for our beloved Chief had escaped unhurt!

"Thank you, my children," he said simply, and we were amply rewarded.

By a daring stroke Garibaldi had turned the enemy's right, and Bosco, fearing to be cut off, was retreating to the town and the castle on the rocky peninsula.

It was now past noon; the battle had begun at seven o'clock; we had fought for hours under a blazing sun and were fairly exhausted. The Neapolitans had made a magnificent struggle. Thus far we had won, but the victory was dearly bought. A second success purchased at the same rate would render our prospects somewhat gloomy. And there still remained the town and the citadel to be taken.

Recognising our weariness, Garibaldi prudently postponed that business till the afternoon. As Patsy put it, there would be an interval for refreshments. It was badly needed. Taking my handful of men by order from the prickly pear field, I led them through the wood in the direction of the town, halting beside a small stream bordered by thick trees. Just to lie in the shade and do nothing was delightful.

"This reminds me of the Elysian fields," I murmured.

"It's jolly comfy!" said my chum. He was terribly prosaic.

Gathering in small groups, the men talked over the events of the morning, lamenting those who had fallen, and speculating on the chance of further fighting.

"If Tommy Barton ever gets about again, he'll miss his mate," remarked one.

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"Ah, poor Bob was a fine chap! Showed the white-jackets Tommy's painting pretty close, didn't he?"

"First over the wall, Bob was. Made me feel bad to see him go down!"

"Hit all out?" asked a man from another group.

"Every bit of the way, sonny. Couldn't last five minutes, I should say."

"Poor old Bob! And there's Joey Bird, he's gone too."

"Nice little chap, Joey was! Sing a rattling good song, he could. There was that little catch of his about the moon and the golden stars. D'you remember it? Goes something like this——"

"No, you don't, Smithson! We've had enough killing to-day, without your murdering that song."

"You needn't make such a fuss; I was only going to hum the first verse."

"All right, Smithson. I know you," and the would-be musician collapsed.

"What a delightful autocrat that chap would be at an amateur concert!" whispered Patsy. "Still, I'm sorry for Smithson."

"Are you? I'm not. I've heard him sing."

"Ah, that makes all the difference. I wonder if Bosco means to hold out?"

"Can't say! Tell you later."

"Good boy! Well, we shall soon see. There's the bugle."

It was nearly two o'clock, and Garibaldi had completed his arrangements for the attack. What these were of course we did not know, but the "Mixtures" stood ready to execute any orders that might be forthcoming.

Colonel Wyndham led one division of the army against the Palermo Gate, a second under Cosenz attacked the gate leading to Messina, while Medici's division, to which we were attached, advanced by the beach.

The scene on the march was most comical. The valiant citizens, who later on applauded us to the echo, were living on board fishing-boats in the bay, while the beach was exactly like a vast gipsy camp.

Except for the soldiers Milazzo was deserted. The people had turned out in full force, carrying their household gods with them. The beach was littered with tables, chairs, bedding, crockery, and cooking utensils, while around each motley collection squatted the entire family. Those who by any means could afford the fabulous sums demanded, had hired fishing-boats and were "rocking in the cradle of the deep," till one or other of the contending parties had gained the victory. When that was decided without any possibility of error, the amateur fishermen and gipsies would return to cheer the conquerors.

"Very sensible arrangement," Patsy remarked; to which I replied that the diplomatic citizens might happen to fall between the two stools.

By this time the struggle had begun at the Palermo Gate, and, after a stiff conflict, some of the Garibaldians forced an entrance into the city.

Bosco's men continued the battle bravely, but by degrees we drove them back, though compelled to fight for every street, and, in some quarters, for every house. In this engagement the brunt of the work fell on the divisions commanded by Cosenz and Wyndham, and I was not sorry that for once we took little part in the actual conflict.

We were not, however, by any means idle. Frequent fires kept us busily employed, while we were also engaged in carrying the wounded to places of safety. A large monastery, abandoned by the monks, was converted into a hospital, whither we conveyed the injured, placing them in the long corridors, some on straw, but the majority on their cloaks with their knapsacks for pillows. Many were quite young, mere lads; one could hardly have been thirteen. A bullet had torn through his left arm, and the doctor said it must be amputated at the elbow. Poor little chap! I fear my expression was not very warlike as I turned away, after giving a kindly nurse some money to buy a few delicacies for the tiny warrior.

All this time the struggle continued fiercely, but about four o'clock Bosco removed the remainder of his troops into the citadel, and Milazzo was ours.

"Shake hands, Jiminy," said my chum that night, as we prepared to lie down on the bare floor of an empty room, "we've broken the back of the work. Bosco's done for, and he's the pick of the Bourbons. A promenade to Messina, and all Sicily will belong to Garibaldi."

"And then?"

"A dash at Naples, end of the campaign, voyage to England, and all live happy ever after! There's something to build dreams on!"

"Just so," I answered. "Both alike. Nothing substantial about foundation or building!"

CHAPTER XVI

A BLANK LETTER

THE first part of Patsy's prophecy had come to pass. Bosco had capitulated at Milazzo, the Neapolitans had cleared out of Messina; all Sicily, at least, was lost to the Bourbons.

"It seems like a chapter out of Munchausen, so far, doesn't it?" I said, as we strolled along one evening to the beach, where many of the troops were encamped.

"Yes, we've done pretty well, but it's about time we made a fresh move. Have you noticed how gloomy the Chief looks? It's hard work for him to get up a smile nowadays!"

"The politicians half badger him to death. Caldesi told me yesterday he hasn't a moment's peace. Some want one thing, some another. The Republicans are all for making Sicily independent: the Piedmontese say it should be handed over to Victor Emmanuel."

"Better wait till Naples is conquered!"

"That's Garibaldi's notion, but everything seems to be getting mixed. Victor Emmanuel's afraid the French will interfere, and there's some talk of not allowing us to cross at all. Young King Francis is making his people all sorts of promises, and, it is said, is collecting quite a strong party."

"It is rather rough on him," remarked my chum ;

"he's only a youngster after all. He doesn't make the bad laws."

"It's the old rule: you can't get away from it: the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children. It holds as good to-day as when it was first spoken; besides, Italy can't be one country while there are two kings about."

"Now you're getting to the root of the matter. Francis must go to make room for Victor Emmanuel, who, mind you, I don't think is playing a brilliant game. He seems to work on the 'Heads I win, tails you lose' principle. If we're beaten, he won't suffer; if we win, he'll step in and bag the plunder. Very pretty dodge—for him! It strikes me Garibaldi is the cat's-paw of clever men like Cavour."

Patsy, of course, was referring to Count Cavour, the celebrated Prime Minister of Piedmont, who, in the opinion of many people, had more to do with the making of Italy than either Victor Emmanuel or Garibaldi himself! His was the subtle brain: Garibaldi's the strong arm.

This is given as a sample of the talk in Messina. Every one wondered why the expedition halted. Sicily was quiet, thousands of fresh volunteers swelled our ranks, we had plenty of ammunition, and, though the straits were watched by Neapolitan frigates, no one doubted our Chief's ability to get us safely over. All kinds of rumours, some absurd, others containing an element of truth, circulated throughout the army.

Victor Emmanuel's agents came and went; friends of Mazzini, the great Republican who wished to overthrow the throne of Piedmont as well as that of Naples, appeared and disappeared mysteriously; the

Chief himself spent hours in the lofty lighthouse gazing through a telescope at the opposite coast; one hardly knew what to make of it all. Patsy, however, gave it as his opinion that, happen what might, Garibaldi would not hold his hand till Naples was conquered.

By this time my little band had dwindled to about half its original number, but Tommy Barton had returned from hospital to resume charge of the flag for which he had risked so much.

Part of a monastery had been given up to our use, and here, one morning soon after breakfast, I received an unexpected visitor. Patsy and I had just returned from inspecting the men, and were in the cell-like apartment which served us for sitting and bedroom, when the corporal on duty brought word that a stranger was seeking admission to Captain Howard.

"What sort of fellow is he?" I asked.

"Looks a queer customer, cap'en," said the corporal. "He calls himself a fisherman, but, I take it, there's a strong dash of the smuggler about him."

"Maybe the chap who took you over to Caprera," Patsy suggested.

"Very likely; I'd forgotten Peppo for the moment. Let him in, corporal."

The soldier saluted and went away, leaving me wondering how my old smuggling acquaintance came to be in Messina, and what he wanted.

"He's brought some news from Naples," suggested my chum. "Very likely he thinks you haven't heard of your guardian's release."

A knock at the door and my visitor was announced.

"Glad to see you, Peppo. I was half afraid the police had snapped you up," said I.

The weather-beaten fellow grinned.

"They'd have to be smart, signor. I've tricked 'em a good many years now."

"So much the better for you. But what of Francesco? Did he manage to escape?"

"Yes. He's back in his old place, though the police reported him as drowned. That was to excuse themselves for letting him slip through their fingers. Francesco's a wary bird, and will take a lot of caging."

"Then we've won all along the line. Of course you know Giovanni got out of St. Elmo?"

Peppo's eyes sparkled. The unusual incident had evidently made a great stir.

"All Naples talked of it!" he exclaimed. "Ah, Giovanni Rugieri is a daring fellow!"

"Have you seen Signor Carter?"

Peppo shook his head.

"You know he has been set free?"

"Yes, signor, but he was not allowed to remain in the country. I have heard that he was marched straight down to a ship and sent to England. Giovanni said he went off by train to Genoa; at any rate he had to leave Naples."

"I hoped you had brought a letter from him."

"No, signor, not from him."

"Then you really have a letter for me?"

Peppo hesitated, made some stammering reply, and, in his confusion, let the big hat drop on the floor.

I caught him looking stealthily at Patsy, and said, "Speak out, man. This is my friend, and we have no secrets."

Peppo actually blushed. "It is from Carlo Rugieri," he said. "You know he is on the other side?"

"Yes. He had a good chance to kill me at Palermo, but he didn't."

"He is a decent lad, only he will not turn against the king. That is a terrible grief to his father."

"But the letter, Peppo!"

I was all impatience, wondering why the young Bourbonist should write to me.

Taking it slowly from his pocket, Peppo placed the letter in my hand.

"Thanks. Now, while I read it, you must have some refreshment. My men will take care of you," and, calling the soldier on duty, I asked him to see to the comfort of my visitor.

Then, glancing at the stout packet Peppo had given me, I broke the seal.

"It seems to be a regular budget," remarked my chum. "Carlo evidently isn't short of paper. What's the matter?"

I sat staring at the sheets of paper in a dazed way, and wondering if my eyesight had gone wrong.

Patsy jokingly repeated his question, and I handed him the packet.

"Carlo's correspondence," I remarked. "What do you make of it?"

"It looks as if he had more paper than ink," he replied, "unless there's some dodge in the game."

There were about a dozen sheets of paper in the packet, and every one was *blank*!

"Isn't there a stuff called invisible ink that can be brought out in some way?" I asked.

"Of course! The very thing! You hold the paper up to the light, or soak it in water. Let's try."

Half-an-hour quickly passed in experiments on the

first three sheets, but all in vain, and our faces were as blank as the paper.

"Carlo must have meant something," I observed. "He wouldn't have sent a man all this distance just for an idiotic trick."

"Are you sure of the messenger?"

"Perfectly. He may not be exactly honest, but he wouldn't cheat me. Still, we can put him through his facings."

"Hallo! Wait a minute! Here's something we've missed down at the bottom of the last sheet. A bit of Latin, by all that's gracious!—'*Vincit amor patriæ*,' or, in other words, 'Patriotism sweeps the board.' What on earth does Rugieri mean by that twaddle?"

Looking at the writing closely, I found, as I expected, that it was nothing like Carlo's style.

"A queer jump, that!" said Patsy. "Let's have the smuggler chap in again."

Accordingly I sent for Peppo, and he answered my questions with the greatest goodwill. Carlo had given him the letter in Naples, saying it was of the utmost importance, and that it must be brought straight to me.

"And what did you do with it?" I asked.

"Took it to the boat and locked it away in my cabin. This morning I unfastened the box and brought it to you."

"Do you know what was in it?"

"Not a word."

"And you showed it to no one?"

"Not a soul knew anything about it. Besides, the sailors were never in the cabin."

"Well, you may think yourself very smart, Peppo, but some one has fooled you. This is not the packet Carlo sent," and I showed him the blank paper.

His astonishment was so obviously genuine that even Patsy, who had been rather suspicious, became convinced of the man's innocence.

"Come, think!" urged my chum, "there must be some explanation of the mystery."

Shaking his head, Peppo declared that no one could have tampered with the papers, as his cabin was occupied during the voyage by a great lady, who, almost at the last moment, begged a passage in order that she might see Garibaldi.

This put me on the scent immediately, and further questioning made it plain that the mysterious Countess had once more crossed my path.

Peppo described the passenger as very beautiful and of high rank, and it was easy to see she had been able to wind the bold smuggler round her little finger. A plausible story, a pair of pleading eyes, a piece of gold had secured her the use of Peppo's cabin, when her task became easy enough. But why should she wish to intercept my correspondence? Putting that on one side for a moment, I wrote a letter to Carlo explaining what had happened, and Peppo willingly agreed to take it to Genoa.

"But mind," said Patsy, "no passengers this time. Not even the grandest lady."

"I would not give passage to a queen!" replied the smuggler with great earnestness, though it was patent he did not altogether believe in our solution of the mystery.

"Now," I remarked when Peppo had gone, "what do you make of all this?"

"Well, I don't know. This woman is a Bourbonist?"

"I am sure of it."

"Yet she puts herself in Garibaldi's power."

"A mere blind."

"Very well: it matters little, one way or the other. Let us begin at the beginning. By some means she learns Carlo is sending you a letter and determines to get hold of it. According to your account she has a grudge against Carlo, but an unmeaning trick would be poor revenge."

"That's so."

"Then it follows that she wanted to obtain his information for herself or to prevent you from receiving it. Why?"

I shook my head.

"You never did her an injury?"

"I never saw her but once."

"Then she must have stolen the papers in the interests of her party."

"Carlo isn't a likely fellow to divulge secrets."

"Who knows? Don't forget there's one thing against him from a Bourbon point of view—his father is on Garibaldi's side, and a father's influence often goes a long way."

"Awkward for Carlo! One side accuses him of murder and the other suspects him of treachery. Still, there may be something in what you say."

"Had your guardian been still in Naples I should have thought the trick had something to do with him."

"So should I, but we can put that out of court. Peppo settled that question."

"And the beauty of it is," said Patsy, "that even if we meet the woman you have no proof against her!"

We sat some time longer discussing the matter, turning it over, making wild shots at the solution, and getting into a more hopeless muddle every minute. At last Patsy proposed a walk in the town to clear our brains, as it was certain we should do no good continuing to debate the truth or otherwise of a lot of hypothetical improbabilities.

The red shirts, the blue coats of the Genoese, and the nondescript uniforms of the other volunteers predominated as usual, but there was a fair sprinkling in the crowd of civilian black, and pretty frocks of ladies.

"Look out for your Countess," Patsy advised, laughing, and I did.

The most brilliant assembly of all had gathered in the grounds of the Palace, nominally occupied by Garibaldi, though the General was more often at the Faro, and, having the entrée, we went in.

The scene reminded me of the receptions at Palermo, though one missed the uniforms of the naval officers. Still, the varied colours made a pretty show, and we strolled about, bowing to an acquaintance here, stopping to speak a word there, laughing and chatting with well-trying comrades who had been with us throughout the campaign. There were many strangers present, too, men who had joined recently and whom we did not know. Conversation was very lively, the more especially as it was carried on in Italian, French, and English, with an occasional sentence in German.

"Nothing succeeds like success!" said my chum disdainfully; he had not forgotten poor Pilo's reception at Palermo.

I was about to answer when a half turn to avoid a

group of officers brought me face to face with the Countess. The woman's impudence amazed me utterly. I knew she was a Bourbonist spy, yet she took her place amongst high-born Sicilian dames and Garibaldian officers quite naturally.

At that moment she formed one of a group composed of the most influential men on the island. Her wonderful beauty, charming manners, and simulated zeal for the cause captivated every one. I thought that, on recognising me, she would display some slight show of apprehension; I had still much to learn. With sparkling eyes and cheeks aglow, as if greeting an old-time friend, she addressed me by name.

"How delightful are these chance meetings," she remarked sweetly. "The spice of surprise doubles the piquancy of the pleasure. Ah, signor, many things have happened since you and I together helped the cause at Genoa!"

Now what could I do but bow awkwardly, and stammer out some idiotic reply? I felt certain this woman had stolen my letter, yet she had the audacity to claim me, not only as a friend, but even as a fellow-worker. Meanwhile Patsy was talking to Menotti Garibaldi, and presently we all turned to walk across the grounds together. Recovering from my awkwardness somewhat, I asked the Countess if she had come from Palermo.

Laughing gaily, she answered, "Have you not heard of my adventure? Oh, I had the most delightful experience! I made the voyage from Naples in a dear little smuggling vessel. It was charming! By the way, the captain chanced to be an old acquaintance of yours. Strange, is it not, how oddly we are thrown

together in these stirring times? Now, in an ordinary way, one would not make friends with a smuggler, but one must make sacrifices for the cause!"

"*Vincit amor patriæ!*" I exclaimed, looking her straight in the face.

She was far too good an actress to be disturbed by the quotation.

"Excellent!" said she. "You could not have put it more neatly. Everything must give way when the country is in danger. It is a grand motto, and we Italians are living up to it."

The brilliant little coterie applauded this, and the Countess threw me a half-laughing glance of defiance. Plainly I was no match for this woman, yet I made one more attempt to shake her composure. Observing that I had orders to attend Garibaldi in the evening, I suggested that the Countess would probably make a short stay in Messina.

"On the contrary, my friend," she replied, "I shall remain here till the army crosses the straits."

"We may never cross, Countess," exclaimed an officer of high rank. "It is rumoured that the king has expressly forbidden us to do so."

"But he can't stop you!"

"Still, we do not wish to offend him."

The Countess laughed, a glorious little trill, like a bird.

"Excellent!" she cried. "Oh, but that is most excellent! First you capture one-half of his Majesty's kingdom, and then you stop through fear of giving him offence!"

"You misunderstand me, madam. I was referring to Victor Emmanuel."

"Of course! How stupid of me! When you spoke of the king I thought you spoke of his Majesty of Naples."

The soldier, feeling vaguely that he was being quizzed, grew hot and uncomfortable, but the Countess soon restored him to good humour.

Several of the party, including Menotti, now turned off to the Palace, and the Countess prepared to follow.

"Farewell, Signor Howard," said she, smiling. "We shall probably meet again soon. Be a good boy, keep up your Latin, it may be useful, and remember me to Carlo Rugieri when you next write."

Before I could reply she was gone, and the ripple of her musical laughter as she chatted to the colonel came floating back to me.

"Keen as a rapier," observed my chum close behind. "Jimmy, you can throw up the sponge whenever you like, that woman can beat you every time."

"I must let Garibaldi know."

"No good, my boy. She's made herself secure. I've been pumping Menotti. She's the Countess Coleno, and a great patriot!"

"Fudge!"

"I'm only repeating Menotti's words: he ought to know. That woman, unless you were dreaming at Genoa, ought to be marked dangerous and placed under lock and key."

"She has the coolest impudence——"

"I believe you. Hot water would freeze on her face. Unless——"

"What?" I asked, seeing that he hesitated.

"Unless our friend Carlo has been playing some scoundrelly game that we don't understand."

"No," I replied, "it is the woman playing false, not Carlo."

That same evening I sought out Menotti and told him my suspicions, but it was plain he attached little importance to them.

The Countess, he said, was known personally to his father, and it was, indeed, at the latter's suggestion she had come to Messina in order to confer with him on the situation.

"It is hardly likely," he concluded, "that a woman who had betrayed us would put herself into our power."

To this there appeared no answer, but all the same I held my opinion, though even Patsy began to think me wrong.

CHAPTER XVII

A MIDNIGHT MEETING

THE comparatively long wait at Messina was of great benefit to the soldiers, who recruited their strength; and of the wounded, many improved so rapidly, that they were able to take their places in the ranks again. Fresh volunteers came in large numbers, splendid rifles arrived from English well-wishers, who also sent quantities of ammunition, and the more thoughtless began to murmur for a start.

Garibaldi still remained undecided and perplexed. He had conquered Sicily, he could overrun the kingdom of Naples, but, would he be permitted to advance?

One party said, "Cross the straits, overcome the enemy, drive the King of Naples from his capital; then you can do as you like with the country!"

The more prudent advised caution.

"By attacking Naples," said they, "you risk everything. The Austrians may come to the help of Francis; Napoleon will send his armies in the hope of getting something out of the scramble; and, instead of giving Victor Emmanuel a larger kingdom, you may lose him a part of what he has now."

The head of this party, I learned, was the mysterious Countess. It was rumoured that she had secret communication with the French court, and had brought an ultimatum from Napoleon.

If the Red Shirts crossed to the mainland, so the story ran, Napoleon, holding Victor Emmanuel responsible, would seize Sardinia.

Chafing at the delay, the volunteers were mad to go forward.

"Better take the bull by the horns," said Patsy. "It generally pays best."

I agreed with him, chiefly because I believed the Countess was playing a deep game, counselling delay in order that Francis might have further time to strengthen his position. I could not disabuse my mind of the idea that this woman was a Neapolitan spy.

The crisis at length arrived.

We of the lower ranks of course only learnt what was happening by accident and half words. Still, it became known that Victor Emmanuel had sent a written request to Garibaldi not to cross the straits. The feeling of suspense became acute. Then our leader's answer was noised abroad, and every one went wild with joy.

"My mission is too noble to relinquish," he replied. "I have sworn to Italy to accomplish it; my programme remains the same. I shall not sheathe my sword till Victor Emmanuel is king of all Italy."

The die was cast. Garibaldi was himself again. For the time he had done with politics, which always perplexed him; the anxious look disappeared, the broad smile returned, the man of action was about to plunge into his natural element.

On the fifth of August a note was brought to me signed by Garibaldi himself. The contents were brief—"Be at the Faro at five P.M. Bring three Englishmen who know how to be silent."

"Here's an adventure!" exclaimed my chum delightedly.

"For me!"

"And for me!"

"Oh, you'll have to stay with the men!"

I am sorry to say that respect for my superior rank did not trouble Patsy in the least, and he showed quite a distressing spirit of insubordination.

"You go and be hanged, Jimmy!" said he; advice which I was not in the least likely to take.

Like some other great men I had a tender heart, so we arranged to leave the "Mixtures" in the care of the Italian ensign, taking Tommy Barton and a man named Ward with us.

Starting at three o'clock, we reached the Faro, or lighthouse, just before five, and waited for the General.

"We're between Charybdis and Scylla now, with a vengeance!" I laughed.

"What's the old yarn? I know Charybdis is a whirlpool on this side, and Scylla a rock on the other, making navigation difficult, but my mythology's a bit rusty."

"I'm rather mixed myself; there are several versions."

"One will do for me. Take your choice."

"Well, Charybdis was a very beautiful woman——"

"Like the Countess!"

"And very greedy——"

"Ah, that's another matter!"

"So Jupiter threw her into the sea, where, changed into a whirlpool, she swallowed up every ship that came near."

"The ruling passion strong in death!"

"The old navigators, trying to avoid the danger, frequently managed to run against a rock on the other side."

"Another woman?"

"Yes, a lady named Scylla, who had the misfortune to incur the hatred of Circe, the famous sorceress. Circe changed the lower part of her enemy's body into a fish surrounded by barking dogs."

"Very uncomfortable!"

"So Scylla found it. Accordingly she threw herself into the sea and became a rock, making it awkward for sailors, who, in avoiding Charybdis, often ran upon Scylla."

"Funny old superstitions, aren't they? Story-books in those days must have been delightful reading for the bairns."

"Especially on dark nights, when their fathers and mothers had gone to the circus!"

Tommy Barton, who had listened open-mouthed, shivered.

"Cap'en," said he, "I don't altogether blame Mr. Jupiter, but as for the saucress I'd put her atop o' that rock, and keep her there till she was dead!"

"I almost think she is dead, Tommy," said my chum demurely, at which the inventor of the "B. L." heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"Punctual, captain!"

We had been standing near a gun-carriage looking out to sea, but at these words every man turned round and saluted.

There stood our leader with his fascinating smile, wearing the familiar gray trousers, red shirt, and wide-brimmed hat. Drawing me aside, he said quietly, "I

am going to the mainland ; you will follow, but will land some two hundred yards further along the coast. Make your way to me without noise, hide your party, and do not move unless anything goes wrong. Do you understand ?”

“ Yes, General. We form a reserve which may not be wanted.”

“ Exactly.”

Without another word he led the way to the narrow canal winding round the fortifications of the Faro. Fifty or sixty boats were drawn up at the sides, two of them being each manned by four rowers and a helmsman. Garibaldi with three officers armed to the teeth stepped into one ; we took our seats in the second. Merry sounds of music and laughter came from hundreds of soldiers on the adjoining beach, but, save for ourselves, the canal was deserted.

Turning round, Garibaldi placed a finger on his lips to enjoin silence, then the boats glided noiselessly through the still waters of the canal. Happily the night, though dark, was still, and we found by experience that the dreaded whirlpool had lost its ancient terrors. The sea was scarcely ruffled, and our rowers had only to fear the currents of the straits. Here and there a red light showed the presence of some craft, but we proceeded on our way without interruption. Within sight of the beach, our helmsman, turning the boat's head, ran for a little inlet some distance away, leaving Garibaldi to go straight forward.

Presently the keel grated against the sands, we stepped out, and the helmsman saying he had orders to rejoin his mates, the rowers pushed off quietly.

The night was dark, the beach deserted. Save for the faint lap, lap of the languid waves all was intensely still. Cautiously and in single file we made our way, ascending a rocky incline crossed at the top by a narrow road. Here I turned to the left, walking swiftly but noiselessly, till arrested by the bright lights gleaming on the ramparts of a rugged fortress.

"Far enough," whispered Patsy. "We must now strike for the beach."

After five minutes' delay Tommy Barton discovered a tortuous path, down which we clambered without any mishap, though a few stones went rumbling to the bottom. Our choice of route was the happiest that could have been made, the path taking us almost directly to the spot where Garibaldi with his three attendants stood under the shelter of a rock.

Crouching in our hiding-place behind the boulders, we strained both eyes and ears in our anxious watch, not knowing what might happen. Presently Patsy touched my shoulder; a fifth man in a white uniform had joined the group.

"A Bourbon officer!" I thought, and somehow my mind instantly reverted to Carlo Rugieri and the Countess.

Apparently the new-comer was talking, and we, growing more and more uneasy as the minutes lengthened, continued to watch. Patsy noiselessly dragged himself to a point higher up the path. The conversation became animated; the sound of Garibaldi's voice speaking scornfully reached us. Then he of the white uniform raised his voice as if working himself into a passion, till it seemed as though one of the officers gave him a friendly caution.

Five minutes more passed. The discussion, whatever its nature, became heated; the stranger, breaking through all restraint, spoke loudly, his voice rising almost to a scream. I trembled with apprehension for the Chief. On that desolate beach, close to a strong fortress, his situation—should the garrison learn of his presence—would be terrible. Barton and Ward lay at my side, and I felt glad to see their rifles peeping over the ledge of the rock. They were both splendid shots and steady as a house.

The strange man was either an idiot or a double traitor. He would not be quiet. His voice rose again distinctly on the still air, and, at the same instant, the report of a pistol rang out above us. A dark body leaped sheer from the rocks to the beach, and we heard Patsy crying, "To the boats, General! We are betrayed! The Bourbons are coming!"

Things happen quickly at a time like this. Half-a-dozen events glided into one another so swiftly that one could hardly distinguish them. The man in the white uniform drew his sword: I saw it flash: so did Tommy Barton, and, almost before it could be raised, the weapon fell—a bullet from Tommy's rifle had broken the stranger's wrist. Springing from behind the rock, I dashed across the beach, followed by my two men. The place was metamorphosed. A red flare rose from the ramparts; a red light and a cloud of white smoke off the shore indicated that a steamer waited to intercept us; the rocks were alive with leaping white patches swarming downward to the beach.

But for Patsy's warning the surprise would have been complete. As it was, Garibaldi's natural fighting ardour nearly finished the mischief. He did not relish

retreating, yet to stay was simply absurd. The Bourbons were at our throats, were cutting off our line of retreat, and still the General stood his ground, his sword flashing with the rapidity of lightning.

We all saw the contest was hopeless, but Patsy alone had the audacity to put his ideas into action. Seizing the hero of two worlds by the shoulder, he literally pushed him toward the sea. This unheard-of proceeding restored the Chief to good humour.

"Come then, my children!" cried he, in his rich, musical voice, "to the boats!"

Meanwhile the enemy had surrounded us, but we steadily fought our way, and, in particular, no man stood long before the General's sword. Patsy was at his side, Ward and the three officers went next, while Tommy and I brought up the rear. The white uniforms grew more and more numerous, they seemed to spring from everywhere; my imagination peopled the beach with them. In the darkness I lost sight of Tommy. Dizzy with excitement, blood from a wound in the head streaming into my eyes, I could not see, but continued to strike out wildly till, my foot slipping, I fell violently to the ground.

By this time my comrades had reached the boats. I heard their yells of triumph, mingled with the vindictive cries of the baffled Bourbons, and saw the hostile steamer's red lights dancing above the waters. The tide of battle had passed, leaving me stranded, but it would return, and I had no mind to be in the way of the back-wash.

Luckily for my purpose the white-coats stood a long time at the edge of the sea, watching the lights of the steamer and hoping she would run the boats down. This

respite I employed in crawling towards the rocks. The distance was short, but my head pained intensely, making me fear that I should faint on the way. After what seemed an endless journey I reached the rocks and curled myself up in a little hollow, hoping the soldiers might overlook my resting-place. They returned from the shore in small groups, talking loudly, wrangling, and evidently in very bad humour, which would make discovery unpleasant from my point of view.

After a while some carrying lanterns came down from the fortress, and the whole party began seeking the bodies of the fallen. This would have made the danger more, but for the fact that they confined their search to the beach, knowing that there alone the fight had taken place. I watched the lanterns bobbing up and down or standing still in a cluster, as some poor fellow was raised from the ground and carried by strong arms to the fort. Farther and farther the lights receded, the white patches grew indistinct and faded from sight, the hum of voices became fainter, till at length I could hear no more.

The situation was now not only dangerous but painful. Daylight would probably reveal me to the enemy. Meanwhile my head ached terribly, and a night in the open without food or drink would not improve it. Again, it was quite impossible to make my escape, unless, indeed, I could crawl into the mountains and find shelter with the peasants. Resolving to try, I first bound up the cut in my head and then set out. Being my own pacemaker I went slowly, stopping occasionally to rest myself against the rocks. Following the defile, I reached the cross-roads and went

staggering along to the right, away from the fort. By this time I was nearly exhausted, but the approach of morning gave me fresh spirits, and I trudged on hoping to see a hut. My sole chance of safety rested on meeting with a good Samaritan, for the sea shut me in on one side and the precipitous mountains on the other. I toiled on, more wearily now, tottering on my legs, half blind, and with my head spinning round like a top. I had sufficient sense to keep to the side, at the foot of the mountains, otherwise my unsteady legs would have dropped me to the beach.

Day came at last, the shroud of darkness departed, the gray dawn crept silently across the heavens, eastward there arose a faint red tinge—a suspicion of the sun—the ribbon of road showed itself more clearly, a mere ledge clinging to the towering heights. This road was dangerous; soldiers would pass along from the fort, and I should fall an easy prey. I wished my head would stop turning round, so that I could think.

Quite suddenly I became aware of a man confronting me. He was tall and grotesque-looking. On his head was a comical cone-shaped hat ornamented with numerous streamers. He wore a short jacket unbuttoned, knee-breeches which had seen much service, and sandals of goatskin. His features were dull and heavy; he had small eyes, very near together, and a swarthy complexion. He spoke to me in rapid undertones as though fearful of being overheard, but I could not understand his jargon, and he could not understand me.

But if the native's words were unintelligible, his actions spoke clearly enough. After a nervous glance along the road he put his arms round me, and with a

tenderness quite astonishing, almost carried me into a narrow path. Supported by his strong arm, I now walked with more ease, especially as each step took me further from the dreaded highway.

We came at length in sight of a low-roofed, thatched hut, which the man entered. The one room of the hovel was miserably poor and smoke-begrimed. A stout bench along one of the walls, a bundle of straw in one corner, a coarse pot or two and a battered pan, made up the furniture. The peasant, however, gave me of his best, and I was grateful.

Making a sign that I should lie down on the straw, he fetched some deliciously cold water, bathed my wound and bound it up. Then lighting a fire of sticks and dried grass, he prepared a sort of vegetable stew. Judging by the taste, the ingredients consisted chiefly of onions; however, it did me good, inducing a comfortable feeling of warmth, and sending me into a peaceful sleep. When I awoke the fire was out, the door closed, and my host had disappeared.

Just at first his absence made me feel rather uneasy, but this apprehension gradually wore off, and nestling in the not over-clean straw, I awaited his return. Afternoon had come when he re-entered the hut alone, but carrying several articles tied up in a small bundle. These he placed one by one on the bench, and his grim features relaxed a trifle at sight of his treasures. A loaf of bread, a big flask of wine, a fat dumpy sausage, a piece of cheese, a little square pot, and a roll of linen—these were the contents of the bundle.

The pot was filled with ointment, of great local repute I afterwards learned, and famous for the healing of wounds. With this he dressed my cut, after-

wards bandaging it with a strip of linen. Then he brought over the provisions, poured some wine into a cracked cup, and placed it to my lips. It was the wine of the country, and exceedingly refreshing.

Next I ate sparingly of the bread and sausage, and, finishing with the cheese, felt that I had enjoyed a banquet. My host, however, would eat nothing, making me understand that these delicacies were special dainties for the wounded Red Shirt.

Occasionally he went, as if in apprehension, to gaze from the door of the hut, but the shades of evening deepened into night and we were still undisturbed.

For two days this kind-hearted peasant kept me in safety, giving me food, attending my hurts, neglecting his own duties to wait on me. The much-vaunted salve really did its work in a marvellous way, while the absolute rest almost completely restored my energies. One thing alone worried me now—the fate of my comrades. That they reached the boats I knew, but what happened afterwards was another matter. However, returning strength endowed me with a cheery optimism, and I resolved to hope for the best.

CHAPTER XVIII

HUNTED

A SURPRISED shout wakening me from sleep brought me to my feet. It was midnight, the hut was dark, I could see nothing, but guessed from the keen night air that some one had opened the door. Crossing the room, I found my host outside in a state of great agitation. At my approach he turned and began talking in a most excited way. It was evident something serious had occurred, but the man's *patois* was unintelligible to me, as I have said. However, I had not long to wait before learning the reason of his fright. The silence was suddenly broken by the roar of a big gun; a second report followed, a warning tongue of fire leaped high from the fortress.

"Garibaldi!" I cried. "*Viva Garibaldi!*" and, snatching up sword and pistol, ran out into the night.

The uproar increased, rifle volleys added to the din, the tramp of feet and cheering of men sounded in my ears as I hurried along the road toward the fort. At the head of the familiar path I halted and crawled behind a rock. Men were struggling up the rugged defile—whether friends or foes I could not tell—but they were in a great hurry.

Presently two or three emerged from the pass, being swiftly followed by others till quite two score had gathered. What was my delight on discovering they

were my own "Mixtures." And in the midst of them stood Tommy Barton with his precious flag. Last of all came Patsy, and I sprang out from my hiding-place calling him by name. Instantly there arose a wild cheer, which must have astonished the Bourbons. The men ran to me with cries of glad welcome; Patsy squeezed my hand, but there was little time for speech or explanation.

"Look out! Here they come!"

My first idea of the landing was wrong; Garibaldi was not there. The daring invaders only included Patsy and the "Mixtures," less than fifty against fourteen thousand trained soldiers who lined the southern coasts.

My friends had stirred up a hornet's nest. The garrison of the fort had turned out, while the watchers at a distance, roused by the cannon's roar and the beacon fires, were hurrying to the spot. Some ascended the defile in our rear, some marched along the road; my little band was in a tight place. On the frowning mountains, even if there, lay our only chance of safety.

The route by which we endeavoured to retreat was well-nigh inaccessible. In some parts the rocks rose sheer for several feet, and up them we must go, mounting on each other's shoulders, and dragging the last man to the top by means of his musket.

Meanwhile the enemy was expending a vast amount of ammunition, which, but for the darkness, would have quickly settled the business. As it was, the bullets chipped the rocks unpleasantly close, and two men were slightly wounded.

Still we pushed on, and our pursuers dropped further behind. They knew nothing of our numbers,

and were chary of being drawn too far from the shore. A few kept on our track much longer, firing occasionally, but the majority retired to guard the fortress or watch for fresh invaders. Up we went higher and higher, apparently shaking off the most dogged of our pursuers, till it seemed the worst of the climbing was over. Though still rugged the paths became easier; they were now really paths, not a hanging series of precipitous rocks, and we felt grateful accordingly. Some of the poor fellows badly wanted to lie down, but I dared not stop lest the enemy, working round another way, should reach the summit first and hold us in a cleft stick. So we persevered, but such a terrible night march I have no desire ever to make again. It was an experience worse than I had even dreamed of.

At the breaking of dawn we reached the top of the cliff, to find before us a wide, dreary-looking, and deserted plateau. I gazed anxiously around, and breathed a deep sigh of relief—at least we had evaded the Bourbons! So utterly spent and weary were my men that they threw themselves full length on the ground, many of them dropping straight off to sleep. A few of the sturdiest volunteered to stand sentry, while Patsy and I sat on a jutting rock commanding a view of the toilsome ascent. We had been hot enough scrambling up, but now the cold was intense, piercing us through to the bone, and setting our teeth chattering like castanets.

Naturally I was all anxiety to hear what had brought the "Mixtures" to the mainland, so Patsy briefly explained what had happened.

"You remember the night when the Chief had such

a narrow escape?" he said. "Well, we hopped into the boats pretty quickly, you may guess. I jumped in with Garibaldi, so did Ward, and the others scrambled into the next boat. We thought you were with them; they thought you were with us. Neither party had a notion of the truth till we reached the Faro. Pretty lively voyage, dodging that blessed steamer! However, we got over all right, and then found you'd been left behind. The General was awfully upset, while Ward and Tommy Barton had it hot from our fellows at the convent. They came in a body asking me to obtain permission for them to cross the straits and hunt for you. The Chief objected; didn't believe in throwing good money after bad!"

"Oh, thanks!" said I, giving him a dig in the ribs.

"Well, we kept on pestering the old chap till he gave way. 'It's very absurd,' said he, 'but perhaps some good will come from it. The enemy may take fright, and if you can lure them from the coast, so much the better. I am coming myself in a few days.' So here we are, and in a pretty pickle, too!"

It was now my turn for story-telling, and I related the various incidents that had occurred—the fall, the climb up the path, the peasant's kindness, and finally the firing of the big guns.

"Much damage?" asked my chum, pointing to the bandages.

"Not a great deal, though a bit painful at times."

"That will wear off in a day or two!"

It is really wonderful what philosophers we can be when some one else gets hurt.

With the rising of the sun most of the men awakened, and walked about to restore circulation in

their half-frozen bodies. As a picnic party well supplied with creature comforts, we should have watched the opening of the new-born day with enthusiasm. Behind us stretched the wide plain, and the distant mountains tipped with purple and gold; at our feet rippled the blue waters, lazily laving the shores of the mainland; before us shone the light of the Faro, and beyond that again rose the majestic pyramid-topped dome of Etna. Under the existing circumstances even Patsy failed to display an intelligent interest in the marvellously beautiful panorama. He voted the whole scene a nuisance, and would have given the lot for a cup of hot coffee.

We now formed ourselves into a council of war and debated what was best to be done.

"Let's get hold of the case squarely," said Patsy; "there's no sense in walking round it. Here we are——"

"Agreed!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Here was a nice specimen of a subordinate!

"The men have food for two days at most, though there's plenty of ammunition. We're shut off from the sea by a line of forts, and fourteen thousand soldiers whom we're to draw after us."

"Interesting bit of strategy, that!"

"We're fifty strong, all told."

"We must spread ourselves out!"

"I reckon the Bourbons will spread us out fast enough!"

"Well, it seems simple enough. It's like a paper-chase, where the hares very obligingly leave a marked trail."

"I tell you what, Jimmy, 'twould have been better to have left you with your friendly woodcutter!"

"Don't know that he is a woodcutter!"

"Very likely he isn't, or he would have cut up that wooden chump!"

"I thought we were holding a council of war?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten. Well, my advice is, let the men have breakfast——"

"And the officers!"

"And then march south, along the edge of the plateau, so as to show ourselves to the Bourbons."

"Very good notion. A sort of Aunt Sally arrangement, only the sportsmen will have their shies for nothing!"

"On the other hand," said Patsy, "they won't get the cocoanuts, even if they hit them."

This sounded fair enough, and the first part of the programme, at least, met with hearty approval. The men ate their breakfast, and, in order not to waste time, one or two finished their dinner as well.

Some distance ahead rose the mountain of St. Angelo, for we were in the district of Aspromonte—a name destined in later years to acquire a mournful celebrity. Pointing out St. Angelo as the general rendezvous, I explained the plan and sent the men on in skirmishing order to play their part as moving targets. Patsy's brilliant idea was crowned by success. The enemy, whom we could see plainly, were in a state of great perplexity. Ignorant of our scanty numbers, and making the common mistake of judging our strength by our impudence, they concluded our force must be considerable.

Above one fort in particular we enjoyed ourselves

amazingly. Patsy had a telescope, which he first levelled at the fort, then in the direction of the sea. As the result of his scrutiny he passed me the glass, and I went through a similar performance. Then Tommy Barton unfurled the "B. L." and carried on a novel course of flag signalling to an imaginary object by a new system of Patsy's invention.

"There's not much fear of their ferreting out the key to that code," spluttered my chum, trying to keep a grave face, while Tommy worked his arms like an animated windmill. The enemy's alarm and perplexity increased fourfold.

Some earnestly watched the movements of our flag, others stared out to sea; while several officers, mounting to the highest point of the fortress, searched the waters with their telescopes to discover with whom we were communicating.

Three men left the fort and darted off in different directions to spread the strange news. Drums beat, bugles sounded, soldiers were drawn up as if to repel attack, while a body of skirmishers advanced cautiously in our direction. When their shots came sufficiently near to chip the rocks at our feet, Tommy furled the "B. L." and we hastily decamped. Patsy was delighted at the success of our venture, and folded his arms in true Napoleonic style.

Traversing the plateau, we halted several times to renew the farce, and at one place I introduced a variation. Utilising the conformation of the plateau, I formed the Red Shirts into a compact body, marched them across a piece of high ground between two depressions, and, directing them to return by the hollow in the rear, covered the same ground over and over

again. It was a very pretty diversion, and, as we afterwards learned, strongly impressed the enemy with the need for caution, since they fully believed we numbered several hundred men. I felt that Napoleon was being reduplicated.

All along the line of forts the commotion was extreme, and at length numerous bodies of skirmishers began advancing up the heights with the evident intention of shutting us in. Having succeeded in our object, I now ordered the men to disperse and make their way rapidly to St. Angelo, which was reached that evening. Here we halted for an hour while Patsy and I formed another council.

Thus far Garibaldi's orders had been carried out to the letter. We had shown ourselves to the troops who were marching on our track.

"Now we must play pussy, and double," I said. "The soldiers think we are making for one of the seaports, Melito or Reggio, and will try to cut us off."

"Where can we go?"

This was difficult to answer; but one of the Red Shirts who knew the district promptly volunteered to guide us to the plateau of the Forestali, whence, if necessary, we might descend to the Adriatic coast.

Go somewhere we must, as the enemy would undoubtedly visit St. Angelo; so, placing ourselves under his guidance, we set off quietly in the gathering twilight.

And only just in time. Patsy, who had remained behind, brought word that a swarm of skirmishers had appeared on the plateau. If they discovered us we were lost; but our guide again came to the rescue.

"The way to the Forestali is now easy, captain," said he. "While you go on with the main body, let me

stay behind with half-a-dozen men to throw the Bourbons off the scent."

"Capital!" cried Patsy. "I'll go with him, and we'll join you later."

To this I agreed; my chum selected six men, and, attended by the guide, they disappeared.

Meanwhile we continued our march, arriving toward midnight at the plateau of the Forestali, where, foot-sore and weary, we camped in the midst of a cluster of pine trees. Flinging themselves on the fallen leaves, the men were asleep in a trice, while I could barely keep my eyes open. Presently I got up and walked about to shake off the feeling of drowsiness. I found the sentries on the alert, but the night was pitch dark, and the rising wind made an eerie sound as it swept through the branches. Apparently the soldiers had missed us; but, as the hours crept on, I began to fear lest Patsy and his companions had come to grief. It was probably this apprehension that kept me awake, for I was dead-beaten, this being my second night without sleep.

At last the dawn broke, the sun rose, the keen night wind gave place to the balmy air of morning, the birds chanted their hymn of praise to the opening day, the men stretched their cramped limbs.

"Hurrah, cap'en! Here they are!" cried one of the more wide-awake, and, turning round, I beheld my chum and his men.

One had his arm in a sling, all looked very tired, yet they managed to get up a smile for our benefit as we crowded joyously around them.

"All right," said Patsy to me. "One fellow's arm broken, Royals rushing pell-mell to Melito. We led

'em a pretty dance! Smart chap that guide! Call me in three months' time!" and, lying down on a bed of leaves, he straightway fell asleep.

Nor was I long in following his example, having first impressed on the officer in command the need for vigilance. A sound nap lasting for several hours put me right; I felt like a new man. I mentioned the fact to my chum, who sarcastically remarked he was extremely pleased to hear it.

That part of the plateau on which we were was beautifully wooded with groves of pines, of firs, and massive oaks. In places, too, the graceful chestnut might be seen, while in some parts walnut trees abounded.

Patsy and I went round to see the sentries. My chum was in good spirits, and laughed heartily at the way in which the Bourbons had been led off the track. By this time the sun had risen high in the heavens, the bitter night-cold had changed into the tropical heat of day. We felt grateful for the shade afforded by the trees, and gladly availed ourselves of the opportunity of bathing in a cool limpid stream.

"What's the next move?" asked Patsy, as we quickly redressed after drying ourselves in the sun.

"Forage for something to eat, but we needn't start till to-morrow."

"Nor hunt very long. There are sheep on the plains, and pits of potatoes, according to our guide of last night."

This was good news, and I immediately sent out a party of men with the guide to obtain something to eat. They soon returned, bringing four fine sheep, a quantity of potatoes, and strings of onions. The sub-

sequent cooking was primitive, and there was an absence of glass and china from the festive board, but we enjoyed our supper nevertheless, afterwards clustering round the fires.

"This," exclaimed Patsy, lazily toasting his feet, "is prime. My motto is like the Frenchman's: 'Here I am, here I stay.'"

The remark was an unfortunate one. It was, in fact, scarcely uttered, when Smithson came in with half-a-dozen natives, bringing startling information. They were fine-looking men, well-made, athletic, and vigorous, though their conical hats, short open jackets, knee-breeches, and coarse sandals gave them a quaint appearance. Each carried gun, bayonet, and knife, and had a couple of pistols in his waist-belt.

Doffing his cap in salute, the leader began to speak. I followed him with difficulty, but understood sufficient to learn that we were in extreme peril. Having discovered our retreat, the enemy were pushing on to surround us with nearly three thousand men. Delay would be fatal; we must decamp at once. I ordered the men to fall in, the Calabrians offered themselves as guides, and we immediately started.

Through spreading forests and narrow gorges we marched, now climbing a rocky precipice, again descending a slope so steep that even the natives failed to keep their footing, while we, less experienced, rolled from top to bottom, clutching wildly at intervening trees to stay our progress. I found to my disgust that one can go even too quickly at times; however, we laughed at our misfortunes and persevered. All night the rapid march continued, and we flitted from summit to summit like a band of unquiet spirits.

Morning found us on the top of a dreary upland scored with hollows, in one of which—apparently the dry bed of an ancient lake—we came to a halt. Here our guides left us, promising to return from Bagnara with food, which the citizens, who were eager for a rising, would willingly supply.

“Game of hide-and-seek on a big scale!” exclaimed Patsy, laughing. “I hope the Bourbons are as dog-tired as I am!”

“We’ve outnarched them at all events, and vanished into space as far as they’re concerned.”

“It’s lucky for us that the natives are on our side;” to which, thinking of the promised provisions, I cordially assented.

CHAPTER XIX

THE "MIXTURES" COME TO GRIEF

THE day had passed in sleep and resting, when a low hum of satisfaction and a rubbing of hands announced the return of our guides. We were indeed pleased to see the worthy fellows, but I rather think our pleasure was chiefly due to three laden mules which accompanied them. A bright fire to sit at, the ground for table, a starry sky for canopy, and a banquet of bread, ham, and wine! Decidedly our picnic was turning out a huge success!

While we ate and drank, the natives told us strange news. Two hundred Red Shirts under Major Missori had landed, passed the forts, and begun to harass the Bourbons from the mountains. Descending abruptly, they had entered the towns and were lighting the fires of insurrection everywhere. The Calabrians had sprung to arms, the soldiers, marching and counter-marching, scaling mountains, crossing plateaux, descending ravines, were becoming exhausted. The whole country-side was aflame.

"Missori must have followed close behind us!" said Patsy thoughtfully.

"Which means that the General himself will soon be here."

"Yes; and we must keep near the coast to join hands with him."

"It will cheer him up a bit to know we're safe," I suggested. Patsy was about to reply, when another Calabrian appeared asking for Lieutenant O'Connor.

He came from Major Missori with a letter, which my chum having read passed to me.

"Have just heard of your whereabouts. Had quite given you up. Am falling back on St. Angelo, where I want you to meet me. The messenger can be trusted; he knows every foot of the road."

"Another pleasant night!" groaned Patsy. "Why, it's harder fagging than with poor old Pilo!"

However, there was no help for it, and fortunately the day's rest had put us in good trim for the journey. At the word the men fell in, we bade adieu to the kindly Calabrians, turned our backs on the cheerful fires, and marched off merrily.

Missori's messenger took us a long way round to avoid the Bourbons, and after a seven hours' tramp we halted in a grove of chestnut trees, near to a purling brook. At midday we rested again, arriving in sight of St. Angelo toward evening. The long forced march had tired us considerably, and we were looking forward to the comfort of supper and a night's rest when the ominous sound of firing fell on our ears. Halting my band behind some trees, I pushed on with the guide to find out what was happening. Our ill-luck clung to us like a wet blanket. Footsore, hungry, and exhausted, instead of obtaining food and sleep we had arrived just in time to take part in a hard fight.

On the mountain slopes the Garibaldians, backed by two or three hundred natives, were struggling desperately with the Bourbon soldiery. One glance showed that our friends were hard pressed. The Royals

fought furiously, and, though temporarily driven back, were preparing to return in overwhelming numbers. Once up the slope, the result would not remain in doubt five minutes. Gliding swiftly to cover, I led my men by a circuitous route to a piece of rising ground which concealed them from view.

For the moment there was a lull in the conflict. The Royals, repulsed, were gathering their energies for a fresh and terrible spring. Their opponents were preparing for a stern defence. I recognised Missori standing in a conspicuous place, animating his men. Near him stood a gigantic native dressed in Calabrian style, and evidently a man of importance.

Throwing out a swarm of skirmishers, the Bourbon officers drew up their troops in three divisions. In front of all, mounted on a splendid horse, sat a white-haired veteran. Firm and erect he sat with drawn sword—a soldier every inch of him. His eyes shone brightly, a smile of proud defiance lit up a face whose scars were the mementoes of more than one hard-fought field. He looked a leader one would be proud of, whose men would follow him to the death.

We waited impatiently behind our cover, expecting the enemy to advance. Why did they delay? A loud cheer and an answering cry of surprise solved the mystery. The first attack had been merely a make-believe, and, under cover of the assault, a body of Royals had crept round to the further slope of the mountain. The leader had stayed only for their appearance on the hill, where their co-operation gave him an almost certain prospect of victory.

"Forward!" The troops ran forward at the double in three compact bodies, cheering exultingly.

The fierce struggle being waged on the mountain slopes crippled the defence of the Red Shirts, and their opponents advanced with the greatest confidence.

Nearer and nearer they came; the first body was opposite our hiding-place. My men shivered with impatience, but I held them firm. The second approached, they were in the line of fire, the moment had come.

"Fire!"

A cry of affright and dismay burst from the hapless Bourbons, and, before they could recover their composure, we were upon them.

"To the bayonet!" I cried. "*Viva Garibaldi!*"

Forgetting our fatigue in that mad rush, we sprang across the intervening space, yelling and shouting like savages.

The Bourbons did not stand two minutes. At the terrible name of Garibaldi they broke and fled, throwing themselves in wild disorder on their comrades in support.

Meanwhile, seizing the favourable moment, Missori, leaving a part of his force to continue the combat on the height, flung the remainder at the throats of the advance party.

The Red Shirts sprang with the fury of wild-cats at their foe, who, alarmed by the tumult behind, wavered and broke. In vain the officers tried to turn them, in vain the lion-hearted leader exhorted them to stand firm: back they went in hopeless, irremediable confusion. The Garibaldians, having their enemy on the run, kept them going. Right across the plateau the chase continued, nor did pursuit cease till the flying Royals were skipping down the rocky ravines like

mountain goats. Then we returned leisurely to St. Angelo, where also the attack had been beaten off. Major Missori shook my hand warmly.

"Cleverly done and bravely!" said he. "That bayonet charge saved us. Your detachment has earned the thanks of every soldier in my command."

"Thanks, major," I answered, "I am sure they did their best."

Not content with this acknowledgment, the major had the "Mixtures" paraded, and commended their action highly.

Tommy Barton, however, observed if they had more pudding they could do with less praise, and I fancy they appreciated their supper more than all the congratulations. Patsy and I came in for our share of attention, but, after relating our adventures, which Missori's officers insisted on hearing, we stole away, glad to secure a night's rest without any responsibility hanging over us. The major intended keeping us with him, but, on the second day, owing to a failure in the supply of provisions, he directed me to march toward Melito, where it was expected that Garibaldi would effect a landing.

"I shall go to St. Lorenzo," he added, "where the citizens are ripe for revolt. Take a dozen Calabrians, and should the General arrive, send me word post-haste."

Guided by the Calabrians, we started from the camp amidst the cordial cheers of Missori's troops.

"This kind of life," observed Patsy, "might truthfully be described as active service!"

"Getting tired?"

"Not at all. I rather enjoy running about the mountains all night long and half through the day. It braces one up, don't you think?"

"It's rough on the shoe-leather!"

"We must get a new stock when our arrears are paid up."

I laughed at this reference to our pay. Garibaldi's officers were not extravagantly paid. Patsy, I believe, was entitled to the princely sum of fivepence a day, my emoluments rose twopence higher, but we consoled ourselves with the idea that some day we should be generals of division and draw on the treasury for nearly twelve shillings a week! How that dazzling sum should be spent we had not yet decided.

Soon after leaving St. Angelo I had despatched several natives to reconnoitre, and they now returned with the information that there was no trace of the enemy anywhere.

At night we stayed in a village, sleeping in a big barn. The people were very friendly, cheering for Garibaldi, and, much more to the purpose, giving us food and drink. Generally speaking, we had found solid help to be in inverse proportion to the amount of lip service. News of our exploit had preceded us, and the story, as usual, had lost nothing in the telling. Missouri's creditable little victory was magnified into the total annihilation of the Bourbon army, while we were hailed as conquering heroes. Tommy Barton exhibited the "B. L." with parental pride, explaining all about it in homely, vigorous Saxon, which sent the Englishmen into screams of laughter, and puzzled the natives very much.

Thinking there might be some heavy work before

us, I let the men have a long night's rest, much to their satisfaction.

After breakfast we started for Melito, and during the march our ears were suddenly saluted by the thunder of cannon. The "Mixtures" broke into an excited cheer.

"Garibaldi!" they cried. "*Viva* Garibaldi! Garibaldi has landed!"

Pushing on quickly, we reached the hill above Melito, and to our unbounded joy discovered that the great Chief had really come. Apparently he had only just escaped destruction. One of his vessels lay stranded on the shore, the second was wrapped in flames, while in the bay three hostile steamers maintained a vigorous cannonade.

The Red Shirts, however, had landed safely, and were encamping on a neighbouring height, separated from us by a deep gorge.

Flinging our caps in the air, we made the hills echo with the shout, "*Viva* Garibaldi!" to which our allies ardently responded.

Presently a messenger came to us.

"The General is going to attack Reggio," said he. "You will advance parallel with him, but keeping to the upper heights. Do you know where Major Missori is?"

"At St. Lorenzo. You will need guides," and I selected a couple of trustworthy Calabrians to accompany him.

"Thanks," he said. "Don't forget! Keep to the upper heights!"

I nodded, and he went off at full speed, while we continued the journey.

Reggio stands on a hill right on the toe of Italy. The town is built on both slopes, and defended by a castle on the top of the hill. At this time the fort was very strong, well garrisoned, amply supplied with provisions and ammunition; fitted, in fact, to endure a long siege. Counting on the help of the citizens, however, Garibaldi intended to take it by storm.

It was midnight when, approaching the fort, we lay down on a neighbouring height to wait till morning. It was not particularly comfortable. Of course we dared not light fires; the wind blew keenly, and we had eaten our last rations. Indeed, during our stay in Calabria we were in a chronic state of hunger, having to rely for subsistence almost solely on the generosity of the natives.

Stretching themselves on the ground quietly, the men went to sleep. Patsy and I kept our eyes fixed on the lights in the town.

"It's easy enough to take that place," he remarked, "but if the Royals like to hold out they can make it warm enough at the castle."

"And then we've half the peninsula to cover."

"Well, we shall see if the Neapolitans really want to get rid of Francis. If not, we shall find ourselves in Queer Street."

The lights gradually went out till only a few remained, while the fort was shrouded in darkness. Striking a match behind the rock, I looked at my watch. It was two o'clock.

Another hour or two passed slowly, when, in the gray of the morning, just as the shadows began to lift, we heard the rattle of bullets and the cries of startled men. The Red Shirts were rushing the town!

Cheer and counter-cheer, shouts of command, despairing cries, screams of startled women who were not in the slightest danger, floated up to us. The "Mixtures" had started to their feet eager to join in the fray, but I held them back. "Keep to the heights," the General had ordered, and it was unlikely he would require our assistance down there; our turn would come later.

So we stood, each man gripping his rifle tightly, gazing at the confused fight. Half-dressed women and children, and men too, ran to the shore in affright. Some of the soldiers followed, but for the most part they stood to their guns till overwhelmed by the storming party. Into the streets they dashed—Red Shirts and Royals—a staggering, panting medley. At places we lost sight of the combatants, but they reappeared, the Bourbons ever being driven back, till at length they went scrambling up the hill to seek shelter at the castle.

"The town is won," said I, shutting up my glass.

"And now the victors will go to breakfast!"

The men who heard Patsy's remark sighed deeply; they could only tighten their straps another hole and pretend to be full. However, my Calabrians offering to venture down, I wrote a short note to the General, and, giving it to the leader, let them go. It was noon when they returned, reinforced by several natives, each carrying a load of bread, of which we made short work. The Chief also sent a message to keep to the heights and be prepared to strike a blow whenever opportunity offered.

From the Calabrians I learned that Major Missori had arrived by a forced march, and that an assault on the castle would be delivered almost immediately.

From our position we had a magnificent view of the assailants as they climbed the steeps, on which, as well as within the castle, the Bourbons were drawn up. Suddenly a dirty gray cloud rolled lazily from the ramparts, the loud report of a heavy gun thundered out; the battle had commenced. Up went Red Shirts and Calabrians, slipping, scrambling, falling, but ever advancing in face of a murderous fire. The Bourbon riflemen, excellent shots and well covered, poured in volley after volley; the ground was dotted with little red and dark-brown patches, and each patch was the body of a man.

"They'll never do it!" growled Smithson, "the fire's too hot."

"Bixio's down!" exclaimed my chum, handing me the glass; "there, right in the centre!"

"He's up again! Seems to have a broken arm."

But now the fight rolled close, and I saw it was time for the "Mixtures" to strike home.

On the opposite side of a broad chasm rose a steep hill which the Bourbons had seized early in the fray. Up this height the Red Shirts vainly endeavoured to climb. Time and again they were thrown back, leaving their best and bravest on the deadly fire-swept slope. Yet the height must be won, for it was the key of the position. I saw clearly enough what ought to be done, but hesitated to give the order which would doom my gallant little band to death. While I still delayed, a staff officer, breathless and bleeding, arrived.

"Who commands here?" he asked; and then, "Take your men across the ravine and dislodge these fellows!"

Tommy Barton unfurled his flag, and the "B. L." floated proudly above our heads. The men cheered

and closed up, the Calabrians being in the rear. Every man there knew his life was not worth three halfpence, but none blenched.

"Good-bye, old chap," whispered Patsy cheerfully as we descended the slope.

We heard the swift rush of the bullets and the defiant cries of our comrades as they persevered in their mad attempt; we heard, too, the exulting yells of the Bourbons who lined the hill. Springing lightly from rock to rock, we crossed the ravine and formed up on the other side. Almost at the same moment a loud shout and the angry sputtering of bullets warned us our approach was seen. A number of the enemy faced about: they had men enough to defend every side of their position.

"Forward, my lads!" I shouted. "Give them cold steel! *Viva Garibaldi!*"

The brave fellows responded with a cheer, though knowing full well that very few were likely to reach the summit.

In spite of his burden Tommy Barton raced ahead, and the "B. L.," dancing and swaying in the sunlight, led us on. It was a wild, mad, desperate rush up the slippery face of that rocky precipice. Man after man slipped and fell, but, springing up, ran on as before.

Halfway from the top the bullets began to get in their deadly work. Smithson, the singer, was the first to fall. A bullet struck the stock of his rifle, and he turned to me with a smile.

"A close shave!" said he; and before the words were well spoken, a second shot shattered his arm.

I motioned to him to return, but Fate had marked him down. With a yell of defiance he advanced, only to receive a bullet through his chest!

"Done for, cap'en!" he whispered faintly, and bending over him I saw that it was so.

My poor Englishmen suffered cruelly. Their animal strength and bull-dog bravery led them to destruction. They were all in the front, and it seemed as if the enemy had purposely singled them out for death. Ward, who had frequently fought by my side, went down, shot through his forehead; Channing, Pole, Masters, and a dozen others equally brave. Patsy had been hit, his red shirt being redder still with his blood, but he still pressed on. So did Tommy Barton, though he staggered from side to side like a drunken man, and his face was deathly pale. But the "B. L.," riddled, ragged, and shot-torn, kept to the fore, and I vowed it should never go back while I had strength to go forward.

Like a pack of weary wolves we pressed on, many of the wounded crawling on hands and knees—none retreating! My eyes ached horribly and my throat was parched, but I managed to raise another "*Viva!*" as we drew near the summit. The response almost broke my heart. Such a weak, thin, pitiful cheer it was, so different from the loud, full-throated cry with which we had started. Looking round, I shuddered at sight of the handful of men following.

Still in front Tommy Barton was staggering worse than ever. The "B. L." dipped and rose and dipped again, was falling for the last time, when, with a desperate effort, I seized the staff.

"Good old cap'en!" gasped the poor fellow, and, turning over, he lay on his face.

The terrible sights, I think, must have driven me crazy. Hauling myself up, I plunged with the flag

into the midst of the foe, striking out wildly, and calling on my men. Patsy was with me in an instant, another and another followed; we fought with Berserker rage, recking nothing of wounds or death. Back went the Bourbons: they could not stand cold steel in the hands of maddened men.

Then Patsy went down, and I struck out more wildly still, forcing the "B. L." into the very heart of the crowd.

Suddenly there arose a yell of triumph, a loud "*Viva Garibaldi!*" and the height was crowned by our comrades from the further side. The Bourbons stampeded like a herd of frightened cattle; the position was won, but at what a cost!

Planting the bullet-torn flag in the ground, I mustered the remnant of my company. They ranged up side by side, twelve all told, not counting the Calabrians, and every man was hit!

I tried to speak to them, but the words were choked in my throat, and at thought of their comrades lying cold and still on the hillside, at thought of the terrible destruction which had overtaken my devoted band, I burst into a flood of tears.

Plainly, I was altogether unsuited for the Napoleonic rôle!

CHAPTER XX

I HEAR STRANGE NEWS

THE battle still raged elsewhere, but the sting was gone from it. Finding the height taken and their position turned, the enemy fell back; numbers disappeared, the firing became feeble, irregular, and without effect; every one knew that the white flag would hang from the ramparts in the morning.

Troops continued to move up, occasional shots were fired from the castle, staff officers dashed to and fro with orders, the Calabrians swarmed another height nearer the fortress, but I told myself fiercely that my dead men had won the fight. In cooler blood I did not rank their feat so high, yet nothing could have exceeded the daring bravery with which they had scaled that fire-swept cliff.

Since my handful of cripples could be of no further service, I sent the worst cases to the surgeons and took the rest with me to search for our fallen friends. The first we found was Patsy, lying where the fight had raged most fiercely, and on seeing him my heart almost stopped with fear. The white face was streaked with blood, the eyes were filmy, the body was motionless. I called him by name, but got no answer; I bared his breast, but could discover no flutter of movement. We opened his mouth, and forced some wine into his throat. A faint sign of life

and a tinge of colour in his cheeks rewarded us. Presently his eyes unclosed and I saw that he recognised me, though he could not speak.

By this time the ambulance men were on the ground, and we placed the dear fellow in a litter. I pressed his hand tenderly, and the ghost of a smile on his poor wan face almost unnerved me for the second time that day. Then the bearers carried him tenderly to the hospital, while we proceeded on our sad errand. The dead we placed side by side on the hill-slope to await Christian burial; the wounded we transferred to the care of the surgeons. My heart grew heavy as I counted them one by one, the gallant men who had loved me, and whom I had led to death!

Tommy Barton still lived when we found him, and his eyes scanned my face anxiously. A draught of wine gave him a little strength, but the dread hand of death was heavy upon him.

"Have—we—won—cap'en?" he feebly asked, and his eyes brightened at my answer.

Presently he spoke again, and bending down I heard him murmur, "Pretty rough on the 'Mixtures.'"

We had an empty litter at hand, but he was so obviously dying that I sent it away. From time to time he muttered to himself, but the disjointed words had no meaning, at least to us, till just before the end. Then in a clear voice he said, "Cap'en, I should like to see the old flag once more!"

Instantly one of the men went off, returning with the flag which Tommy had borne so bravely in the fight. His eyes sparkled on seeing it; he seemed to devour the torn folds with his gaze. We placed him in a sitting posture with his back against the wall, and

I guided his hands so that they should grasp the staff. Thus he died, with a peaceful smile on his face and his eyes fixed on the shot-riddled colours that none would ever again lead into action.

Night had come by the time our dreary task was over, and, leaving a guard to watch the bodies of the slain, I hastened to Reggio. Hunger and fatigue had no power over me now: grief had conquered both. Even the knowledge that Patsy lived failed to stir me as it should. He lay sound asleep on a mattress, and all through the night I sat on the floor beside him, only half conscious of what had happened.

He had not wakened in the early morning when I returned to the last sad duty on the hill-side. A number of Calabrians, assembled by my orders, were already digging the graves in which we placed the bodies of our fallen comrades. Then, bare-headed and with quivering voice, I read the beautiful burial service of the English Church, the graves were filled in, and we said a last farewell to those left sleeping peacefully on that fatal hill.

Carrying the "B. L." and followed by my faithful remnant I marched slowly towards the town. The Red Shirts drew up as we passed and spontaneously saluted. Some had seen, all had heard of the desperate assault which had destroyed the "Mixtures."

At the entrance to Reggio we met the Chief and his staff. Springing from his horse, he advanced and shook my hand. Gazing sympathetically at my few surviving men, he said aloud, "My children, I am proud of you, one and all."

The "Mixtures" cheered frantically. For such public praise from their idol they would have gone to

death a thousand times over. At his next words they hardly knew how to contain themselves.

"You are too few now to form a separate detachment," he said, "but from this morning you belong to the Guides. Your brave captain will return to his place on my staff."

As the Guides were the pick of the volunteers and belonged to the General's own bodyguard, they might well be proud, but I felt they had fairly won the distinction.

To me he said, "You will stay in Reggio a few days to rest, and afterwards follow me at your leisure."

I saluted, and wishing my comrades farewell, handed them over to Missori, now a colonel, who commanded the Guides.

My next task was to find a room in which to store the tattered "B. L.," after which I went straight to the hospital. Patsy was awake and sensible, but too weak to talk; he could only smile and press my fingers gently. Still it pleased him to see me there, and his eyes followed my movements lovingly as I went round to cheer up my wounded men. On the third day he was considerably better, and we had quite a long talk, for he was all anxiety to hear how the fight ended. Without going into detail, I told him of our victory, and how the "Mixtures" had distinguished themselves.

"I know," said he. "Poor chaps! they must have suffered awfully. Where's that silly old flag?"

"In the town: you shall bring it on to Naples. Garibaldi has enrolled all our men in the Guides."

Patsy nodded, evidently understanding the extent of the carnage.

"All the Englishmen fell," he remarked. "It was awful. I never saw anything like it. And you?"

"I was in luck: only got a scratch or two!"

"Tommy's flag didn't lag behind!"

"Not much!"

"Poor old chap; he was game! And what are you doing now?"

"Resting a bit. To-morrow I follow the General."

"Will they fight?"

"I don't think so. The officers say it will be a triumphal procession all the way, more or less."

"I wish I could come with you."

"So do I. Never mind, join me at Naples."

The morning after this conversation I visited the hospital for the last time, distributed the remainder of my money amongst the wounded, and left the old flag in Patsy's charge. He was certainly much better, and the surgeon was hopeful of his rapid recovery. Clean, temperate living, and outdoor exercise enabled him to stand a shock which would have killed many men.

"Good luck and a pleasant journey!" said he, as I shook his hand. "Don't get into any scrapes, and look out for me at Naples."

"All right. Keep an eye on the flag. I intend taking that to the old country."

"Good-bye, old man."

"Good-bye!"

So we parted—I to seek Garibaldi, he to lie helpless in an Italian hospital. Such are the chances of war!

Fortune again smiled on me, and, instead of doing the journey afoot, I proceeded luxuriously in a carriage with a Neapolitan gentleman who had thrown in his lot with the Liberators.

The district through which we passed was a picture of delight. Graceful orange trees, olive groves, fruitful vineyards, handsome villas in the midst of luxurious gardens met the eye at every turn, while the golden beams of the sun and the dazzling blue of the southern sky enhanced the beauty of the scenery.

We overtook bodies of volunteers on the march, who cheered lustily at seeing the red shirt, and the villagers lined the streets to give us welcome. Here and there we saw a group of Bourbon soldiers, but they were disarmed and prisoners. In the southern half of his dominions, at any rate, King Francis appeared to have but few friends.

Near San Giovanni we met with further proofs of Garibaldi's marvellous success. Disbanded soldiers were making their way home in hundreds, laughing, talking, and praising the great patriot who had subdued them not so much by force of arms as by the strength of his own extraordinary character. Even my companion expressed his amazement at this strange scene, which so plainly exposed the rottenness of the Bourbon cause.

"The soldiers were expected to fight to the death," said he.

"Is that so? Then their leaders must be fearfully disappointed!"

We found the Chief established in an insignificant cottage, the kitchen of which was crowded with officers, while outside a number of newspaper correspondents of various nationalities had assembled. My companion, whose destination was Bagnara, went to the inner room where the General sat, while I joined the officers in the kitchen.

Those who knew me at Reggio greeted me warmly, and very soon I was shaking hands with a dozen others to whom the story of the assault had been related. From the talk I gathered that thus far the campaign had been simply a military promenade. Everywhere the Bourbons were in retreat, while General Briganti had just surrendered with 7000 men. All the forts in the neighbourhood had fallen without firing a shot, and every hour brought news of some fresh and bloodless success.

"Depend upon it," remarked one of the staff, "we shall just march straight to Naples without the slightest trouble. There won't be any fighting; the officers can't trust their men, and that's the whole truth."

Most of the listeners agreed; some few inclined to the opinion that General Ghio would risk a pitched battle in an advantageous place.

At this moment my late travelling companion left the Chief's room, bade me farewell, and drove away. Soon afterwards Garibaldi had his dinner—a piece of bread, a glass of water, and a fig; with, of course, the half-cigar for dessert.

Bixio now brought orders for several officers, who disappeared, while others went to their quarters. Some, among them myself, had to be content with the sky for covering, as the houses were literally packed with people from base to roof.

I had just stepped outside the Chief's quarters when a young fellow in civilian's clothes exclaimed, "Excuse me, but I think you must be a fellow-countryman."

"Good shot," I answered, laughing. "Are you a volunteer?"

"No; newspaper correspondent. I tell the good

folks in England all about the war, and what they killed each other for. But it's harder work than volunteering at present."

"Not much fighting!"

"Fighting? From my point of view it's just awful. One can't always be sending word that two more Red Shirts have come in with prisoners. It gets monotonous, irritates the editor, and upsets the equilibrium of the readers. Looking for your hotel? Come and stay the night at my place."

"With pleasure."

A short, rosy-cheeked, merry-looking fellow, with sharp eyes and an air of assurance, was this war correspondent. I felt at once that while he lived our own army or navy need not lack a commander.

Crossing the square and entering a field, he halted beside the hedge, exclaiming jovially, "Here we are!"

This much was apparent even to me, but I altogether failed to find the hotel. He of the rosy cheeks, however, knelt down, grubbed about in the hedge, pulled out a short, clumsy ladder, and directed me to follow him. Then I discovered our residence—a flat-topped stack—to which we ascended, drawing the ladder up after us.

"Select, commodious, and cheap," said the rosy one. "Now for supper!"

My respect for this enterprising gentleman increased rapidly as he dug out both food and drink from their hiding-place.

"This is really very kind of you," I said.

"Not at all, my dear sir, not at all. Simply a matter of—ah—friendship. Felt drawn to you at once," and he shared his supplies like a man.

Naturally we, or rather I, talked of the campaign, and before the end of the meal my new friend had a tolerably full account of the adventures of the "B. L." in Calabria, and of the last desperate charge of the "Mixtures."

"Very interesting," said he, pulling out a book on which he made a number of dots, dashes, and curves, like a Chinese puzzle. "Very!"

"And very painful to me."

"Must have been—Mr.—ah, how stupid! Don't even know each other's names. I am Richard Bird, commonly called Dicky-bird, from my vocal powers."

"My name is Howard."

The correspondent was still busily engaged with his book, but at this he looked up with sudden interest.

"Howard?" said he; "James Howard?"

I nodded, rather surprised.

"What luck!" he exclaimed. "Fancy dropping against you in this wretched little village! Why, you're the very fellow I wanted to see! What's become of Mr. Carter?"

"Mr. Carter?" I echoed wonderingly.

"Sort of guardian of yours, isn't he? An out-and-out patriot, that spends his money like water. Got shut up in St. Elmo and had to be released. Nearly brought England into the mess."

"He has returned to the old country."

"Sure?"

"Certain."

"Very odd that. No one else has met him, though he's been drawing heavily on his bankers at Genoa. I've been asked to look him up. When did you see him last?"

Feeling vaguely alarmed, I explained what had happened, and also my reasons for believing that my guardian had returned to England. Dicky-bird listened attentively, and when I had finished fell to whistling.

"Queer yarn," said he; "very."

I anxiously inquired if he thought there was anything wrong.

"Can't you guess what's up? Well, they're just sweating him for all he's worth."

"Who?"

"The Neapolitan government."

"But you yourself said they'd set him free!"

"A blind, my dear fellow; a mere blind. Just let him out to satisfy our people; made a great show of passports and such like, and then quietly clapped him into another place. Why, the thing's as clear as—as anything!"

"Then you think he is still in Naples?"

"Sure of it. That'll make a nice handle for my people. Where's the ladder? Excuse me, but business is business, you know. Spicy little par. that! Back again in an hour or two. Pull the ladder up after me and let it down when you hear me whistle. So long!" and the wide-awake correspondent, sacrificing sleep to duty, vanished.

Drawing up the ladder I lay down, but the news I had just heard had thoroughly upset me. At last, however, I fell into a troubled sleep. Wakened by the hot rays of the sun falling upon me I sprang up, and there was my new acquaintance sleeping peacefully on the hard ground at the foot of the stack. A prod with the ladder brought him to his feet.

"Awfully sorry," I said. "Did you whistle?"

"Whistle is it?" he asked, looking at me reproachfully. "Why, the staff came running out in undress, thinking the ammunition magazine had exploded, and Garibaldi threatened to put me under arrest. Thought I was signalling to the Royalists twenty miles off. Oh yes, I whistled—a wee bit!"

"A pity you didn't act up to your name," I remarked. "Now a real dicky-bird would have——"

"Look here, old chap," he interrupted, "you've mistaken your vocation. You ought to get a berth in my line. Such colossal——"

"Steady, my boy! Don't give yourself away. Let's have some breakfast."

"Very kind, I'm sure," and with the utmost good humour he helped me to demolish his own provisions.

"See you again in Naples, and we'll have a hunt for Mr. Carter," said he as I rose to go. "I suppose you couldn't manage a battle or two on the way? This chevyng business doesn't lend itself freely to description. I've worked the cheers and kisses and prisoners to death. Folks won't read that kind of thing for ever. If you could just hint to the old man what a fix we're in now, he might devise something."

"All right, I'll mention it. Much obliged for your hospitality. This stack makes a comfortable bed."

"Does it?" said he. "Now you're adding insult to injury. Down you go! Off my premises, sir!" and he flourished a ham-bone in true melodramatic style.

After a little more good-humoured chaff we parted, and I made my way to the humble cottage where the Chief had already breakfasted. He was surrounded by his staff, giving orders to the various officers as I approached. First one then another darted off, and at

length, bidding me take one of the horses captured from the enemy, Garibaldi sent me with a message to Colonel Caldesi, who was menacing a mountain fort. Selecting a beautiful dark bay, I started on the journey, delivered my message to Caldesi, who was just disarming the scanty garrison, and returned to the Chief.

The scenes of the previous day repeated themselves. The country-folk were out in great force; bodies of volunteers hurried to the front, in the vain hope of catching their leader; disbanded soldiers slunk away home, or openly proclaimed their intention of upholding the revolution. Unless the Bourbons in the north of the kingdom showed a much firmer front than their comrades in the south, Garibaldi's success was assured.

CHAPTER XXI

A MILITARY PROMENADE

THE physical exertion, the novel sights and sounds, the difficulty of keeping up with Garibaldi prevented me from thinking about my guardian, but at night I had leisure to review the facts of the case, and my uneasiness returned.

Seeking out Menotti, who led the advance-guard, I inquired for the Countess.

"I don't know where she is," said he. "She left Messina as soon as her work was done," which I quite believed.

"Do you think she has returned to Naples?" I asked.

"Very likely indeed; if so, we shall soon see her again. Isn't this campaign a farce? I don't believe we shall fire a shot on the route!"

"So much the better. We had fighting enough on the island."

"Some of us had a little extra in Calabria," he answered, laughing, as, wishing him good night, I went to my quarters.

Menotti was quite right when he called the campaign a farce. Whether through treachery or the imbecility of their leaders, the Bourbon soldiers had no chance of fighting. They had become merely mobs of armed men, without the slightest military order or

discipline. I felt glad to see them surrender, since a battle must have ended in massacre.

General Briganti, who had capitulated with 7000 men, was murdered by his own soldiers for betraying them; but at Soveria General Ghio was compelled to yield with even a larger force.

So we pursued our journey triumphantly, a few guides leading, two or three staff officers, Garibaldi a couple of miles behind, and the army keeping up as best it could with its impetuous leader. The Calabrians guarded the mountain passes, and all the Bourbons who failed to retreat in time were made prisoners, their weapons being given to the civic guards of the various towns. In this way the southern part of the peninsula was cleared, and we rapidly approached the city of Salerno.

I was riding ahead with Colonel Peard, who generally went by the name of Garibaldi's Englishman, and with Captain Forbes, when a scout met us with the information that a Neapolitan army, 30,000 strong, lay near Salerno. Sending him to the Chief, the colonel asked us if we cared for a little diversion.

"I don't suppose there's much risk in it," he said, "but of course it is just possible we may fare badly."

"Are we going to capture the 30,000?" I asked.

"Not exactly, but we're going to drive them back on Naples, which will be much the same thing."

"Go on!" said Forbes, laughing, "I'll be one of the beaters."

The colonel was a tall, fine-looking man, with a heavy flowing beard and an air of habitual command. He was, I should say, past middle age, and altogether of such appearance that the farce which was soon to

follow, though ludicrous enough, could be easily understood. He was a Cornish gentleman, I believe, but, like my guardian, had always taken great interest in Italian affairs.

Riding on in the direction of the nearest town, we were met by scores of people who lustily shouted "*Viva Garibaldi!*"

Forbes looked at me and chuckled.

"What a lark!" said I. "They think it is the General."

We two came in for a share of popular favour, but Peard was literally mobbed.

The news travelled like wildfire, and by the time we reached Eboli the streets were packed. Fortunately it was growing dusk, but the deluded citizens had done their best to provide us with a triumphal procession. Chinese lanterns stretched across the streets and decorated the houses, flags fluttered gaily from the windows, well-dressed ladies leaned from the balconies waving bright-coloured streamers, the mob cheered as only a mob can, and brass bands marched in front playing with great and quite unnecessary vigour the well-known Garibaldian hymn.

Peard, the arch dissembler, played the game perfectly, smiling his approval, doffing his hat, and bowing right and left to the excited populace. Concerning what would happen when the error was discovered we did not distress ourselves. On we went through the crowded streets, the brass bands playing us straight to the house of the syndic or mayor, who waited to receive us. The first part of the comedy had proved excellent, the second was even better.

Bowing to the ground and reverently kissing Peard's

hand, the syndic led us into a sumptuously furnished apartment, where he had caused a real banquet to be spread. Glancing at the tempting dishes, I murmured a sigh of satisfaction; the nature of the colonel's diversion was just to my taste.

As Garibaldi's *alter ego* the colonel should have resisted the rich delicacies, but the temptation was strong, and he succumbed. First of all, however, the great man had to show himself at the window in response to the cheering, and make a short speech, the gist of which appeared to be that he was tired and required rest. Upon this the kind-hearted people, unwilling to annoy their fetish, raised one tremendous "*Viva!*" the massed bands indulged in another verse of the hymn, and then the assembly quietly dispersed.

"Thank goodness!" I whispered to Forbes. "They were beginning to make my head ache."

While we were consuming some delicious Neapolitan ices a servant brought word that the deputies of the town desired to obtain an interview with his Excellency.

Peard was equal to the occasion. "I am fatigued," said he, "and require rest. Tell them to return in the morning. I will see them at three o'clock."

The syndic himself took the message, and the deputies obediently withdrew. Garibaldi's slightest wish was law in those days.

After supper we adjourned to another room, where Peard, drawing the syndic to the window, talked to him in whispers. Presently the two left the room together, the colonel telling us to await his return. What he meant to do I had not the least idea, but thus far my share in the diversion was decidedly

pleasant. This was a side of campaigning that had much to recommend it.

When the colonel returned I was lying on a couch half asleep, but his words effectually awakened me. I was about to pay for my supper.

"Jump up, Howard," said he briskly, "the syndic's servant is saddling your horse. I want you to ride back to the General; Forbes and I will follow. Tell him the good people of Eboli think he is in the town, and that I have made free use of the telegraph wires for the last hour. General Ulloa commands the Neapolitans, and I've taken the liberty to inform him that Garibaldi's here with 5000 men, and that the rest have gone by sea to Naples."

"Will he believe it?"

"He has believed it. I signed the message with the name of one of his trusty spies. By this time he is making his plans for a retreat in order to guard Naples. If the General can manage to send on a few Red Shirts post-haste, the trick's done! Ride as hard as you can."

With a last regretful glance at the cosy room I went down into the silent street, where a man stood holding my horse. Springing into the saddle, I gathered up the reins and galloped off. Fortunately there was little danger to be apprehended from the enemy, but the night was dark, the road rough, and consequently I did not enjoy my ride. Still the syndic's supper had been delicious, so I could not well grumble.

Dawn had scarcely broken when I reached the General's quarters, but he was already sitting down to his frugal breakfast. Giving my horse to a soldier I entered the house, and was at once admitted to the General's presence.

"Sit down," he said, "and have some breakfast."

I looked at the homely board and thought with a sigh of the banquet at Eboli.

"Thank you, General," said I, "but I will first give you my message."

"Message? Ah, I forgot. You've been with Peard."

"And with Captain Forbes."

"Oh, then something rich is coming. Three mad Englishmen riding together would be certain of some adventure," and breaking his dry crust in two, he proceeded to eat.

He listened to the story, laughed heartily at the mistake of the citizens, frowned when I spoke of the banquet, and expressed his approval of the colonel's action.

"That will clear the road to Naples," said he, "and, once there, the work is done. Basso!"

Basso, his faithful servant, opening the door, came in.

"I'm starting in five minutes; let the carriage be ready!"

Basso saluted and disappeared. Work had always more attraction than eating for the Chief, so, dispensing with further breakfast, he buckled on his sword and went to the door.

"Your horse?" he asked.

"Yes, General."

"It looks in good condition. Off you go! Pick up the first hundred men you can, and bring them on sharp. If we've left Eboli you'll find us at Salerno."

By this time everybody was ready to start with or without breakfast, the carriage had been brought round, the guides went ahead, the staff officers were on horse-back behind, all the troops in the place were in motion,

and, as I cantered off in one direction, the General's party set out toward Eboli. I executed my mission without difficulty, borrowing a hundred men from Bixio's detachment, which volunteered in a body. We overtook the Chief just as he entered Salerno, where his reception was similar to that which the colonel had met with at Eboli.

The next morning I accompanied him to the railway station, where about a dozen of us started for Naples, leaving the army to follow at leisure. The scene was well-nigh indescribable. The mob was everywhere, packing the streets, thronging the station, flooding the line, climbing on the train, the engine, every available bit of space that could by any possibility be occupied. The train steamed out at a snail's pace, the driver afraid of crushing a human being at every revolution of his engine wheels.

But, wild as was the scene at Salerno, it could not be compared with the demonstration at Naples. The citizens had apparently all gone mad. Every man, woman, and child in the city and neighbourhood must have helped to swell the crowd. Looking out on that sea of upturned faces, I thought of the would-be murderer at Palermo, and wished the journey at an end.

One unscrupulous man could easily put an end to Garibaldi's career. King Francis had fled to Gaeta, but the fortresses dominating the city were occupied, and it was believed that 14,000 armed soldiers remained in Naples, while we numbered fourteen or fifteen all told. It was a queer way of conducting a campaign.

However, we crawled along at walking pace through the roaring, banner-waving crowd, to the accompani-

ment of drums, bugles, and trumpets, as if all the instruments in Italy had been pressed into the service.

Utterly without fear Garibaldi smiled and bowed in acknowledgment of the plaudits, and, as his carriage passed the Bourbon guns at the entrance to the Toledo, he stood up in sight of all men, whether friends or foes. The journey came to an end at last, and we descended at the Palazzo d'Angri, where the Chief established his quarters.

Towards dusk, while I was taking my spell of duty, the General called me into his room to copy a paper, and before leaving it again I took the opportunity of telling him my fears concerning my guardian.

"But he was released!" he said. "Did I not show you Giovanni's letter?"

"Yes, General, but his English friends have received no news of him."

The Chief appeared to meditate.

"Is it possible that they put him in prison again?" said he, half to himself. Then aloud, "My boy, I am sorry for you. Nothing can be done just yet, but in a few days the fortresses will be ours, and we can make a search. Meanwhile we must look for Giovanni; perhaps he will be able to clear up the mystery."

I thanked him and was turning away when he added kindly, "To-morrow nothing will be done, beyond these stupid fêtes and processions. If you like, take a day's leave and look round for yourself."

"Thank you, General. I will avail myself of your kindness," I replied, and returned to my post.

Accordingly the next morning I left the Palace, to the envy of my brother officers, who would have given much to escape the ceremonies of the day. Little

good, however, seemed likely to spring from my liberty. Two minutes after reaching the street I was merely an irresponsible atom, tossed hither and thither by the surging crowd. Sometimes I was carried from street to street, sometimes I was kept penned for an hour so closely that it was impossible to move.

It was a grand feast-day, the anniversary of some gorgeous religious festival, and quite against my will I stood to watch Garibaldi and his staff on their way to church. After the service there was a procession of triumphal cars down the Via Toledo, and again I was an involuntary spectator.

Evening had set in when at length, hungry, weary, and out of humour, I arrived at the hotel where my guardian had been in the habit of staying. The landlord, who had spent the day demonstrating, did not recognise me, and was far too excited to talk about anything save Garibaldi and the white oxen that had drawn the cars. However, I lured him into my room, and, locking the door, placed a pistol on the table. The fellow turned very pale, and looked wonderingly at me.

"Listen!" said I sternly, "and answer my questions; do you remember Signor Carter?"

"Yes, signor; the Englishman who was put in prison."

"Very good. Have you seen him since he was arrested?"

"Yes, signor. He came straight here when he was set free."

My heart beat joyfully.

"Tell me all you know about him!" I exclaimed.

The man's story seemed plausible enough, and indeed

there was no reason why he should conceal the truth. My guardian had arrived at the hotel one evening quite unexpectedly. He was in feeble health and appeared dazed. Going to his old room—it was, in fact, the very one we were in—he asked the landlord if he knew what had become of Giovanni Rugieri.

“Giovanni is a clever fellow!” I here interrupted.

“Clever, signor? Ah, Giovanni is a match for them all! Men say,” he continued, crossing himself devoutly, “that he must have sold himself to the Evil One in order to escape from St. Elmo. Ah, it was marvellous! Truly Rugieri is a great man!”

“But to the story,” I said. “Did you know his hiding-place?”

The landlord looked at me with a cunning smile.

“Truly, signor,” he answered, “a clever man would not have made it easy for the police to find him.”

“Still, you knew something?”

“Some one, signor, who, in his turn, knows every one.”

“A useful friend! So you set him to work?”

“With success, signor. Giovanni came before the night passed.”

“And then?”

“Signor Carter no longer had trouble. Giovanni took it all on his own shoulders, and saw to everything.”

“And where is Signor Carter now?”

The inn-keeper raised his hands.

“I cannot tell. He and Giovanni left here the next night in a closed carriage, and the Englishman has never returned.”

That the police had played an underhand trick by re-arresting my guardian the man did not think pro-

bable, because, if so, Giovanni would undoubtedly have heard of it.

As there was nothing further to be learned I ordered supper, as I intended to sleep in the house. Though not altogether satisfactory, the tale reassured me a little. Without doubt my guardian had been set free, and, with the wily Giovanni to help him, the chances were all in his favour of getting safely out of the country. Whither he had gone still remained a mystery, but most likely Giovanni would be able to set me on the right scent.

Feeling greatly relieved I sat down to supper, enjoyed a sound sleep, and was back at the Palace before the General began the public duties of the day, though he had already done an hour's hard work. With that kindness which won for him the warm affection of thousands he immediately interested himself in my doings, listening attentively to my story.

"Cheer up!" said he sympathetically, "there is no cause for uneasiness. Under Giovanni's care Signor Carter will be safe."

"I wish I could see Giovanni myself, General."

"So you shall. At present I am terribly busy, but in a day or two everything shall be cleared up."

Thanking him I withdrew, knowing how precious was every second of time to this man who carried so heavy a burden on his shoulders. The ante-room was crowded with people; officers awaiting instructions, governors of neighbouring towns and country districts, agents of Victor Emmanuel, spies, agitators, police officials, needy beggars, making a strange jumble.

In the courtyard I met my recent acquaintance, Dicky-bird, radiant and cheerful as ever.

"Have you found him?" he asked eagerly.

"Not yet; but I'm on the track," and I told him of my talk with the inn-keeper.

"That looks like business," said he. "I daresay the explanation's very simple when we get to know it."

"I hope so, but it seems very queer."

"It's only in keeping with the country. Did you ever see anything to equal yesterday's proceedings?"

"Make good copy for your paper!"

"Splendid, only 'twas difficult to get a view! Is Francis going to fight?"

"I believe so. He has fallen back on Gaeta, but Capua is strongly garrisoned, and he has 40,000 men on the north side of the Volturno."

I was proceeding to give my companion some further information when an orderly arrived from Colonel Bertani, who wished to see me, and I was, therefore, compelled to hurry away.

CHAPTER XXII

A MYSTERY AND A FIGHT

SEVERAL days had passed since our unconventional entry into Naples. The volunteers arrived by detachments, the fortresses dominating the city were in our hands, and many of the Royal troops had joined us. Then, as now, most folk found it to their interest to cheer with the strongest party. Yet, beyond cheering, making loud speeches, and taking part in processions, the Neapolitans did very little. I could not find that one of our wounded had been received into a private house, though at first they had no better resting-place than the stones of the Jesuits' College. There was little leisure for the officers of the staff, but one morning I found time to look over St. Elmo. Scores of citizens were exploring the fortress, many of them timidly, as if almost expecting the ponderous gate to be suddenly closed on them.

The sight was not a cheering one. The whole place was of enormous strength; the walls were of massive thickness. Bomb-proof passages wound their tortuous course, like huge stone serpents, far down underneath the city.

Shudderingly I went into one of the dungeons, now, thank goodness, empty. An aperture in the door, chiefly for the benefit of the gaoler, and a tiny slit in the outer wall alone admitted light. A massive iron ring

attached to the wall spoke eloquently of the prisoner's unhappy lot. The only article in the shape of furniture was a stone slab forming a bed. A noisy group of citizens, bustling along the passages, broke the train of my thoughts. They poured into the cell, led by a tall fellow, gaunt, emaciated, wild-eyed, and white-haired. Flinging up his arms, the man broke into wild invective, cursing the Bourbons for their cruelty and injustice. A political prisoner, evidently, released by our advent, and he had brought his friends to view the very cell in which he had spent years of hopeless misery.

I went out quietly, so as not to attract attention, and resumed my wanderings. I wondered in which part my guardian had been confined, and still more how Giovanni had made his escape from such a formidable prison.

Dreaming thus I went heedlessly on till the foul smell, the darkness, and, most of all, the impressive silence brought me to a standstill. Without intending it I had descended below the city, and stood in a narrow passage, on either side of which were several dismal cells. These had evidently been used for victims of a special class. Most of them were shut, but I took a peep into one which was open. It was intensely dark, and the floor felt wet. Taking a step forward I placed my hand on the wall; it was damp and moss-covered.

"What a horrible den!" I exclaimed, when I received a terrific blow on the back of the head, and fell insensible.

When returning consciousness brought me face to face with the horror of the situation, I shrieked aloud in despair.

Rising feebly, I went to the massive door: it was fastened!

I crept painfully round the cell; only the moss-covered walls met my outstretched hands. The awful silence, the impenetrable gloom, the blank solitude preyed on my nerves, and I shouted like one demented for Patsy to set me free. I envied the gallant fellows sleeping so peacefully on the hillside at Reggio.

By degrees I became calmer and tried to think. Who had played me this dastardly trick, and with what object? I could not remember having made a single enemy, except, of course, the Royalist soldiers who had crossed swords with me on the field of battle. The Countess? I put that idea aside at once; she had no interest in my death.

One possible solution of the mystery there was. More than one unhappy prisoner had lost his senses in the dungeons of St. Elmo, and it seemed feasible that an unfortunate wretch, lurking near his former prison, had conceived some hazy notion of thus revenging himself. Still, it mattered little any way; here I was, with the comforting reflection that the fortress had been rigidly searched, every cell had been opened, every prisoner had been set free; no one would dream of making a further investigation! My doom was practically sealed, and I made up my mind to die. The wound in my head caused intense pain and quite dazed me. Sinking on the wet ground, I waited stolidly for death to end my misery, only wondering occasionally what Patsy would say when he heard of my mysterious disappearance. Of course I had no means of telling how the time passed, but the minutes crawled by. I could no longer sit upright, and gradually

slipped to the ground in a state of coma. I remember breathing a prayer of thanksgiving that insensibility would rob dying of its terrors.

At some time or other my mind, like the last flickering effort of an expiring candle, made a vigorous attempt to assert itself. I came back from utter hopeless darkness into a world, not of life, but of dreams. Bright flashing lights, like fiery meteors, surrounded me, strange unnatural noises sounded in my ears, huge black shadows danced before my troubled eyes. The explanation of all this was very simple, but several days passed before I understood it. Then one morning my eyes opened in the glorious sunlight, and a cheery human voice exclaimed joyfully, "Hurrah! Back again? Well, you've had a pretty little adventure this time, my friend!"

I smiled at the rosy-cheeked, good-humoured fellow who stood by my bedside and pressed my hand.

"All right," said he. "Take things easy. There's no hurry, I'll go and fetch the doctor."

It was some time before I had recovered sufficiently to understand what had happened. Then it appeared I owed my life to Dicky-bird.

"It was a lucky accident," he exclaimed cheerfully. "I happened to be on the ramparts sketching, saw you enter, and waited for you to return. However, as you seemed so interested down there I followed you, and of course didn't find you. After hunting all over the place I went straight to Garibaldi. He knew nothing of you, but an officer said it was your turn for duty. The next day I got another interview with the General, who gave me permission to search the fortress thoroughly with a body of volunteers. We explored

every nook and cranny without result, but I felt sure you hadn't left the place, and, as a last resort, made the men open every cell. They laughed a good deal, but obeyed, and finally we managed to unearth you."

"You have saved my life," said I gratefully, and having thanked him related my strange adventure exactly as it happened.

Dicky, as he insisted I should call him, whistled softly.

"This is a queer business!" he exclaimed. "Have you any notion who did it?"

I told him my idea, which he pooh-poohed.

"Look here," said he impressively, "the sooner you're out of this country the better your health will be. You're in some one's way here. Have you heard any news of your guardian?"

"Nothing fresh. He was set free and has left Naples; that is absolutely certain."

"Yet he has never reached England!"

"What do you suspect?"

"I don't know, but if he has met with foul play, why should not you?"

The question was unanswerable, and I brooded over it. Was my guardian's freedom an absolute certainty after all?

The day after this conversation I felt able to proceed to Caserta, which the Chief had now made his headquarters, and Dicky intended to go with me. We had just finished breakfast—I was still at the Palazzo d'Angri—when the man left by Garibaldi to wait on me announced a visitor, Giovanni Rugieri. Springing up I greeted him warmly, and exclaimed, "I have been expecting you!"

He returned my greeting effusively.

"I have but just come from the General," said he, "who told me of your trouble. I have been very busy, but, had I known, you should not have remained in suspense an hour."

"Then you bring me good news?"

Before answering he glanced at my companion.

"An English friend," I said, "who is interested in the fate of my guardian."

"Then I may speak freely? But it is difficult. Until last night I did not know there was anything wrong. After escaping from St. Elmo I visited your consul secretly, told him of Signor Carter's arrest, and begged that he would insist on his release, as a British subject. As I expected, the government gave way, your guardian was set free, and I myself saw him safely on the way to Genoa."

"While no one," interrupted Dicky sharply, "has seen him since."

"It is strange," murmured Giovanni, "yet not altogether incomprehensible. The police may have received orders for his re-arrest; if so, he is probably at Gaeta."

"And who," asked Dicky, "do you think responsible for the outrage on Signor Howard?"

On this point Giovanni admitted he had no explanation to offer. His only suggestion was that I had been the victim of a mistake.

"Curiously enough," he added, "I was myself at St. Elmo that day."

"Yes," said Dicky quietly, "I remember seeing you there."

"Then really you can tell us nothing fresh about my guardian?" I asked.

"At present, no; but, should he be in the hands of the Bourbons, I shall soon learn. Are you going to the front?"

"Immediately."

"Then we shall meet again. Don't be down-hearted about Signor Carter. By some means or other I will find out what has become of him."

I thanked the kind-hearted Neapolitan, who, promising faithfully to bring me some information soon, took his leave. Only when the train was half way to Caserta did Dicky remember a further complication.

"How can your guardian be in prison," he asked, "when he is continually drawing on his bankers?"

The question made the muddle worse, but I had great faith in Giovanni's shrewdness, and resolved to wait patiently for the result of his inquiries.

Duty, too, prevented much brooding. The Chief had established his quarters in the vast palace of Caserta. Our right wing, under Bixio, lay at Maddaloni; Medici commanded the left wing at Santa Maria; three hundred picked volunteers held Castel Morone, through which a road runs to Caserta.

The country was hilly; the men had to cover a wide area, which gave the staff plenty of work.

The enemy had 35,000 men on the right bank of the Volturno, 6000 garrisoning the important fortress of Capua, and 15,000 in reserve at Gaeta.

King Victor Emmanuel was marching with an army through the Papal States, to gather, as the volunteers said bitterly, the fruits of Garibaldi's labour.

"You will see," said one of these prophets of evil, "now that Naples has fallen we shall be wanted no longer."

"Why doesn't the Chief proclaim a Republic?" another asked. "Then the Piedmontese might join us if they like. I, for one, don't want their king!"

"Nor I. Garibaldi's good enough for me!"

"Kings are all alike," exclaimed another. "Some one else can do the dirty work, and they'll take the reward. Garibaldi doesn't want a king. In my opinion he's been deceived!"

"Garibaldi wants a free Italy. If he declares for a kingdom so shall we."

"That's so, but I'm a republican all the same."

In fact many of the best men in the volunteer army were republicans, and only the great Chief's loyalty to Victor Emmanuel made it possible for the Piedmontese to annex the two Sicilies. One word from him, and unhappy Italy would have been the theatre of a threefold fight.

Garibaldi was absent when I arrived, and the army had been temporarily placed under the command of General Türr. Evidently some stirring work was intended. Pontoon bridges were thrown across the river, bodies of troops were quietly assembled, and in the morning they crossed in two columns, one to attack Cajazzo, the other to storm the outposts of Capua. As it chanced I did not go with either, having been sent with a message to Bixio, who kept me waiting at Maddaloni till news came that Türr had taken, and established himself at, Cajazzo.

Returning with this information to Caserta, I learned that the second expedition had ended in disaster, the Sicilians having fled incontinently when charged by the Royal cavalry. However, we did not allow the repulse to daunt us, especially as Türr had succeeded at Cajazzo.

I spent an hour that evening with Dicky, who was out of humour. As it was the first bit of actual fighting since his arrival, he had crossed the river with the troops, and had only just escaped being killed.

"I think it's disgraceful!" he said. "What's the use of providing them with a war correspondent if they don't fight? Phew! It made me quite hot!"

"You should have gone with the others."

"To Cajazzo?" asked he, pointing up the river. "Well, I don't know much about soldiering, but if I were the enemy I should just swoop down on that little lot before they could say 'Jack Robinson!' Why have you planted 'em over there without any supports or anything?"

I felt inclined to smile at our military critic, but an event soon happened which showed he had not spoken without reason. The check at Capua induced Türr to strengthen his position, and the next day was spent in establishing batteries and throwing up barricades, as if our leader expected a counter-assault.

Officers and men worked hard, so that by night-time our defences were much improved. Morning had well broken when Medici's secretary wakened me from a sound sleep.

"A note for Colonel Cattabene at Cajazzo, to go without delay," said he, "and General Medici wishes you to ride hard."

I was wide awake now, and took the note with a laugh.

"Twenty miles odd for the round trip will work up a nice appetite for breakfast!" I said.

"Make the colonel feed you; your horse, too, will be all the better for a rest at Cajazzo."

My servant brought the animal round, I saw to my pistols, told the secretary to report my departure, passed a joke with a brother officer, who was congratulating himself on having escaped the mission, and set out.

The morning was beautifully fine, my horse in good condition, and I quite enjoyed the first part of the ride. Passing through our outpost supports, which were stationed on a ridge of the Tifata Hills, and learning the direction of the pontoon, I rode on quickly. With every mile of the journey the secretary's suggestion increased in wisdom, and I resolved to breakfast with the gallant colonel at Cajazzo. A small body of troops held the bridge on our side of the river, and I stopped a moment to speak with the officer commanding.

"All quiet yonder?" I asked.

"So far; but I'm getting nervous about Cattabene. You see, his force is rather isolated, and if the Royals made a smart rush from Capua our troops might get cut up."

I made him some laughing reply, and passed on. The Volturno is wide and very deep, my horse did not like the water, and I had to hold him with a tight rein. Suddenly I heard the sound of musketry from behind the rising ground on the other side.

Dismissing all thought of caution I pushed on swiftly, reached the bank, and put my horse to his full speed. Instinctively I guessed the truth. The regulars had come down with a rush, and Cattabene was fighting for bare life. At every yard the sound of the uproar grew more distinct; the combat was evidently in full swing. From the top of a neighbouring hill I got a view of what was going on, but the confusion was too

great for me to understand the details clearly. The regulars were in overwhelming force! Our men, broken up into small groups, were fighting desperately but in hopeless case.

Hardly knowing what to do, I reined in my horse. It was too late to return for help; to advance seemed to be courting death. However, I had my orders, which must be obeyed. In five minutes I was in the fierce fray, fighting, like the others, for my life. I saw the colonel, but could not get to him; the Royals ringed us round completely.

The carnage was awful. Men fell everywhere. In one spot a company of boys, the eldest not sixteen, had lost half its strength, but the rest fought on like veterans. Here, a dozen volunteers, thrown together haphazard, held a hedge; there a Neapolitan squadron, galloping wildly over the open ground, slew without mercy. Men cheered and yelled excitedly. With reckless bravery some threw themselves on the bayonet-points, to be killed instantly. Formed in little knots, some stood their ground stubbornly, firing into the thick of the foe. Bayonet crossed bayonet, sword met sword, the rattle of musketry never ceased, the fire-points flashed to left and right, in front and rear. Further resistance was sheer madness. Indeed, there had been no hope from the first, and gradually the broken remnant fell back toward the river.

Suddenly from the foremost of the fugitives there rose a heartrending cry of despair. A second body of the enemy, working round to the rear, had cut off our retreat.

Bullet or bayonet, sabre-stroke or lance-thrust on this side; the wide and deep Volturno between us and

safety! Cheer after cheer burst from the exulting Royalists as they cut our men down, and, conspicuous among their leaders, mounted on a powerful gray horse, rode Carlo Rugieri. He did not see me, and I was glad that chance kept us asunder, for in the terrible excitement I should most assuredly have fought him blade to blade.

One final effort we made to stem the current, and though the stand did not last long, it gave some of the men time to reach the bridge.

Then came the end. Leading the cavalry on his gray horse, Carlo rode us down. We were broken into fragments, tossed helplessly hither and thither, flung aside like planks from a wrecked ship, shot, sabred, bayoneted, trampled under foot, pushed into the river to drown.

And ever in that wild press the steel gleamed before our eyes, and the exulting cries of the horsemen rang in our ears. Those few fateful moments were crammed with more excitement than I had ever conceived possible. For myself, I missed the bridge and was forced into the river, my terrified horse struggling hard to keep afloat. Helpless now to do any good, I bent my energies to escaping. It was a long, hard swim, but I lightened the weight by getting rid of my holster, jacket, and heavy boots, and, when the animal showed signs of distress, slipped into the water myself.

A long way down we reached the opposite bank, where dozens of friendly hands stretched out to save us. Leaving my horse in the care of an officer who lent me his, I rubbed myself dry and rode off to headquarters with the news of our disaster.

Unfortunately for us, Dicky's prophecy had come true.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST FIGHT OF THE RED SHIRTS

THE repulse at Capua and the tragedy at Cajazzo had put an end to our military promenade. By the orders of Garibaldi, who had now returned, we worked hard for several days at strengthening our defences.

The volunteers eagerly demanded to be led across the Volturno, but we were not strong enough to oust 40,000 determined soldiers from a well-chosen position.

In the character of candid friend, Dicky went further, saying we should find all our work cut out to hold our own. Still, the enemy were clearly doomed to ultimate defeat, since they could not conquer us and the Piedmontese armies which were rapidly marching into the country.

The days succeeding Cajazzo were to me rather dreary. Patsy was still at Reggio, while Giovanni had failed to learn any tidings of my guardian.

"It is most unaccountable," said he on the occasion of his visit to Caserta. "I never heard of so strange a case. I quite thought to learn he had been re-arrested, yet my agents inform me there is no English prisoner at Gaeta. It must be that, for some reason unknown to us, he has decided to hide himself."

I thought this very improbable, and said so. Giovanni threw up his hands with a touch of despair.

"Can you suggest anything more reasonable?" he asked, whereupon I hinted at foul play.

"From the Bourbons? Yes," he assented; "but I have almost positive proof he is not with them, and no one else would injure him."

"Well," said I, "this fighting business will soon finish, and then the mystery shall be solved if I have to search Italy foot by foot."

Giovanni wrung my hand, exclaiming enthusiastically, "Oh, what a grand thing it is to have such a loyal friend."

The Italian was far from demonstrative as a rule, and this spontaneous expression touched me.

"You will help me?" I said, knowing full well what the reply would be. Nor did he disappoint me.

"We will search together," he answered. "There is my hand on it."

Giovanni had brought some information of the enemy's movements, and our conversation was interrupted by an orderly who came to say the General waited.

"Have patience for a little while longer," he said to me; "the war will soon be over now, and we shall both be free to act."

His words cheered me up, and I began to look on the bright side of things. As he had said, matters were hastening to a conclusion. Ever since the terrible morning at Cajazzo persistent rumours had reached us from Naples of a plot to restore the king's authority. It was freely stated that clever Bourbon agents were in the city organising a conspiracy to make head against the new order of things, and that the Royalist army intended to co-operate by forcing a passage through our defences.

King Francis was, in fact, to break up the volunteer army, and, returning to his capital, forbid Victor Emmanuel to make any further advance. In this case it was thought France or Austria would interfere and uphold the rights of the Bourbon sovereign.

Generally speaking rumour has a habit of proving false, but when these tales circulated I could not help wondering if the beautiful Countess had reached Naples.

On the last day of September 1860 I lay down to snatch a few hours' sleep in the palace of Caserta. I had just returned from the front, where all appeared quiet, and, feeling quite fagged, was glad to obtain a little rest.

"Howard, get up, quick!"

The light showed it was morning, though I seemed hardly to have closed my eyes.

"The enemy have crossed the river and are advancing along the line; there's work to be done."

Springing up and calling for my horse, I followed the speaker to the front of the palace, where the Chief stood listening with unruffled features to the accounts of the enemy's advance.

The reserves were under arms, the officers in their places; every one except the General was highly excited.

The Royalists had crossed the river at several different points; the outposts had been driven in fighting, and a determined attack was being made on our positions.

I have said the country was hilly, and our line extended so far, in order to command the roads leading to Naples, that a formal disposition of the troops was difficult to make. In fact, the army was divided into

a number of distinct groups, each more or less isolated from its neighbour.

Bixio commanded at Maddaloni on the right, Medici at Santa Maria on the left; 300 picked volunteers held the hillock of Castel Morone, barring the road to Caserta.

Had the Royalists struck one blow with their whole force at any part of the line, they would probably have carried their king in triumph to Naples. As it happened they attacked all our positions, thus crippling themselves and giving us a better chance of resistance.

Garibaldi listened to the various reports, made or amended his plans, and soon his aides were galloping off in all directions with orders, while he started almost alone for Santa Maria, where the guns spoke loudest. I was despatched with a message to Bixio, and told to return along the fighting line, keeping my eyes open to see how the struggle went.

Of the battle as a whole I can give no account, except from hearsay. To me it appeared as a panorama of small but headstrong fights; the daring recklessness of both parties, indeed, formed the most striking feature of the contest.

My ride to Maddaloni was most curious. At one moment I was alone on a narrow mountain path with no soul in sight, the next I was watching the advance of the Royalists; occasionally I was in the thick of the fight.

Once a broken body of infantry swept past me, descended into the valley, and climbed the opposite slope, while the ridge they had abandoned was occupied by the enemy. As the morning advanced, this happened more frequently; it was, indeed, quite plain

that our men were losing ground. They fought with their usual stubbornness; but the enemy had the advantages of numbers, knowledge of the ground, and superior artillery. They were, too, in deadly earnest; and I could not help wondering what the result would have been had they boldly contested our march, step by step, from Reggio.

As I proceeded, the battle-cries grew fiercer, the bodies of troops denser; the valleys were shrouded in smoke, musketry rattled incessantly, the hills re-echoed the thunder of artillery. Here and there where the smoke lifted, volunteers could be seen defending a position, Royalists swinging forward to the attack, cavalry in gallant array charging down on lines of glittering steel, or wheeling to right and left seeking escape from the deadly bullets. Wounded men with bloodshot eyes, smoke-begrimed and bleeding, passed me—some in despair, but the majority still confident.

I delivered my message to Bixio in the thickest of the fight, amidst a perfect shower of bullets, and with cannon-balls ploughing up the earth at our feet.

"They have forced us back," said he. "But tell the General we are making them pay dearly for every foot of ground, and they shall never get through us. As long as a man stands, the right wing will fight."

Looking on at the terrible struggle I could well believe him. Every ridge was crested with steel, every bush provided cover for marksmen whose muskets vomited death.

Still the enemy would not be denied. They advanced—slowly, it is true, but surely—covering the ground, little by little, like some huge serpent coiling round its victim.

Even during my short stay one could not fail to mark their steady progress. To the right, to the left, in the centre, hill after hill fell into their clutches, while the volunteers slowly withdrew, leaving little heaps of slain to mark their former positions.

The Royalists were in high fettle. It was the birthday of their young monarch, and they went very near to making him a splendid birthday present.

In spite of my faith in Bixio, it was with very gloomy forebodings that I rode away from the neighbourhood of Maddaloni. Had I known how severely Medici was being pressed, I should have felt even more miserable.

Half-way between the extreme right and Castel Morone things looked somewhat brighter. There the volunteers had repulsed every attack till the retreat of their comrades compelled them reluctantly to retire.

Arrived at the road leading through Castel Morone to Caserta, I decided to see how the fight progressed at the hillock, and, setting spurs to my horse, galloped along the uneven road.

If Bixio's men were worthy of praise, what can be said of the noble three hundred who held Castel Morone all that weary day against a column three thousand strong?

Leaving my horse with the wounded at the rear, I joined Pilade Bronzetti, to whom had been entrusted the defence of the hillock.

"Warm work this!" he exclaimed, looking round. "Where's the General?"

"At Santa Maria. I have just come from the right."

"How is Bixio getting on?"

"Badly. His men are falling back."

"Not in panic?"

"No, oh no. They're fighting splendidly; but the enemy are too strong for them, and they are being pushed from Maddaloni."

"Things are black, or, rather, red on the left!" said he, looking grave. "You can see the track of the Bourbons by the blazing buildings."

"They seem to have taken St. Angelo."

Bronzetti nodded. "Steady, my lads!" he cried suddenly. "Here they come. No firing, mind, till I give the word. Let the English captain see how Lombards fight!"

The volunteers, all men from Lombardy, answered with a cheer. They alone, along the whole line on that terrible morning, had not yielded an inch of ground. In spite of fierce assaults, in spite of great losses, they held undaunted the post of danger. Over their bodies, but in no other way, might the enemy get to Caserta.

Lying behind hastily-constructed barricades on the brow of the hill, they waited with loaded muskets. The Bourbons came on with a fearless rush that threatened to carry all before it. Standing fully exposed, Bronzetti marked their progress; his men had their fingers on the triggers, but not a musket was discharged.

Up came the lusty, gallant fellows, nearer and nearer, when, "Fire!" cried the Lombard colonel, and the head of the column dropped.

There was a momentary hesitation, and then Carlo Rugieri, springing to the front, urged his men forward. Again the deadly bullets crashed into the column; but the Bourbons, led by their daring officer, never stopped till they crested the brow of the hill.

Then the Lombards jumped up, sword and bayonet flashed in the sunlight, there was a ringing cheer, a shock, a clash of arms, an exulting yell, and back went the Bourbons, literally thrown into the valley. In the excitement some of us ran half-way down the slope, but Bronzetti stopped the mad rush, and we slowly returned to count up our losses.

"That's the third attempt," said the colonel. "They'll wear us out in time. Seven to one are heavy odds! Did you notice the youngster who rallied them?"

"Yes. That's Carlo Rugieri. I know him well."

"I have never seen such a reckless fighter! He doesn't rate his life at the value of a brass button. At the first attack he actually got amongst us, cutting down two men with his sword!"

"He stands loyally by King Francis."

"He's a very fine soldier, but we shall have to despatch him."

"Well, he has courted death ever since the war began."

More than one of the Lombards openly said the young Bourbon officer was deliberately trying to get killed, and in after days I became of the same opinion.

Meanwhile the shattered column was reforming down in the valley, and it was obvious that the assailants intended making a further effort.

"After to-day it cannot be said the Neapolitans won't fight," I remarked.

"Very few of us will be left to say anything," answered Bronzetti with a grim laugh.

He spoke in jest, but there was enough truth in the observation to make one's heart ache. If the enemy

stuck to the work they would have only dead men to oppose them in the end.

A rousing cheer cut short my reverie; our opponents were again advancing. This time they came in three columns, preceded by a swarm of skirmishers. Bronzetti clambered on to a mound and I with him; his face was very grave.

A hail of bullets from the sharpshooters whistled round us, and I felt relieved when the colonel at length descended.

"They mean business this time," said he quietly, and, raising his voice, cried, "Keep cool, my lads! Remember we have to die here!"

The men cheered and waited in grim silence; they understood how serious the situation was. Indeed, it has always seemed marvellous to me that we were not swept away by the first rush; but each Lombard was a picked marksman, and fired as steadily as at practice.

Before that terrible storm the assailants hesitated; only Carlo rushed on undauntedly. I trembled for him, but somehow the bullets missed him.

We heard him call to his men in scornful, biting words, and presently, plucking up courage, they followed. Many fell, many more, awed by the pitiless fire, ran back seeking shelter, a few only reached the entrenchments.

The hand-to-hand fight was fierce but short. Bruised, bleeding, and baffled, the stormers were dashed back like angry waves that have hurled themselves in vain against an iron-bound coast.

I saw Carlo, hatless, wounded, drunk with impotent wrath, borne bodily down the slope by some trusty soldiers, who refused to allow him to waste his life.

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Bronzetti's teeth met in his lip as another batch of wounded was carried to the rear. It was a terrible game in which his Lombards were engaged.

All this time the battle raged furiously from right to left, and it was plain that both wings steadily continued to give way. Unexpectedly the Neapolitans were proving foemen worthy of our steel.

At Castel Morone alone the enemy could make no impression.

"Tell the General we can hold out another three hours," said the colonel, as I sorrowfully took leave of the devoted band. On my way to the left I learned how hot the fighting had been in that direction.

Driving in the outposts, the Royalists had attacked Santa Maria with incredible fury, hurling themselves repeatedly against the gate and the battery on the railway.

From the talk of the wounded, I gathered that the barricades alone had saved the volunteers from crushing defeat. As to Garibaldi, I heard of him everywhere. Wherever the danger was greatest or help was most needed, there he appeared, sometimes attended by an officer or two, again leading up reserves just in the nick of time, but always animating the men and cheering them on to fresh endeavours.

At St. Angelo I found him as usual in the midst of the fray. Affairs here were critical. The enemy had captured half the village, several hundred volunteers lay dead in the streets, four guns had been lost. The place was filled with smoke; shot and shell flew screaming through the air; the musketry fire was incessant; men shouted in exultation or lay with the death-rattle in their throats; every neighbouring slope

was the scene of savage strife ; every strong building was converted into a fortress ; round the great monastery especially the struggle was one of life and death. Through the smoke-clouds there leaped occasionally a sheet of flame, as some hotly contested building caught fire. Here, bleeding from their wounds, men staggered slowly to the rear ; there a body of reserves dashed forward to seize or hold some important position.

Telling the General briefly what was happening elsewhere, I rode beside him, galloping to this post or that where his presence was most needed. In the stress of the fight there was no time to think. It was simply a matter of riding, charging, or helping to repel an assault.

Once a staff officer galloped up with welcome news from Medici ; the enemy could make no further impression on Santa Maria. Presently another appeared swaying helplessly in his saddle. His head was cut ; one arm hung disabled. His face, except where stained by blood, was death-white. His horse's sides were lathered with foam, the nostrils flecked with spume, the eyes bloodshot and staring.

The officer himself could barely speak, as, lifting him from his saddle, we placed him on the ground with his back against a tree. He had ridden at top speed from Maddaloni, and his news was worth hearing. Bixio had stemmed the retreat of his force, had held the enemy in check, had forced them back, driven them from Maddaloni, recovered all his positions, and was preparing to advance !

We cheered like men demented, flung our hats in the air, and raised wild shouts of victory.

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Seizing the supreme moment, the General ordered an advance, and his men leaped to the front as though the fight had but just begun.

There was to be no further retreat that day—at least for us! But the Neapolitans, sullenly standing their ground, made us pay dearly for our success. They retired, it is true, but very slowly, and we were compelled to fight hard for every position.

Still we went forward, cleared the village and won back our original line, though of those who had been driven from it in the morning, many, alas! were fated never to return.

The Royalists now made their final stand; but on our extreme left the battle was over, and the troops confronting us were forced to retire.

Garibaldi, who, whatever his military faults, rarely failed to strike home, sent me with an order for the cavalry to charge.

Giddy with excitement I joined in the ride. Out from a piece of wooded ground we swept, intending to break the retreating infantry, when a fine cavalry regiment, beautifully led, dashed right at us. Neither side swerved in the gallop, and we met with a tremendous shock.

This time, however, the Royalists weakened and fled, while we galloped in pursuit.

I did not see the end. My horse, stumbling, threw me heavily to the ground, where I lay in a half-dazed state as the tide of battle swept on. Horsemen spurring hard to the front, line after line of infantry charging with levelled bayonets, and all cheering madly, passed by, leaving me alone with the dead and wounded on the stricken field.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RED SHIRTS DISBANDED

THE blow on the head must have partially stunned me, as I lay till night without the slightest desire to move. The groaning of wounded men, the tramp of returning troops, the triumphant cries of the victors, even the deadly peril of being trampled to death by horses' hoofs failed to rouse me.

At length I rose, and my horse, which had remained near me, pushed his damp nose against my face. Returning the faithful animal's caress, I slipped an arm through the bridle and stumbled along in the direction of St. Angelo. My legs tottered, my head burned, but, aided by the directions of the searchers for the wounded, I reached the outskirts of the village. Here, seated round a camp fire, I found several officers. One of them, a young Sicilian, who had fought beside me at Calatafimi, came forward quickly.

"Captain Howard!" he exclaimed in astonishment, "why, you are reported dead! Here, Paolo, take this horse; give it a rub down and a feed. Sit here by the fire, Howard. Major, where is the wine?"

All except the Sicilian were strangers to me, but they were very kind. None could do too much for me. Food and drink restored my strength, and I listened with interest to the talk of the battle.

Every one praised Bixio, who, unaided, had com-

pletely outmatched his assailants, while Bronzetti and his brave Lombards had held their own till the very end of the fight, when the remnant of the Neapolitan column, passing over their dead bodies, had broken through towards Caserta.

"A stupid move," continued the speaker, "because they will all be captured in the morning," which really happened.

"Those Lombards behaved like heroes," I remarked, thinking of their splendid defence.

"So did General Dunne's Sicilians. I never saw men fight better."

"What about Eber's charge at Porta Capua?"

"Splendid, wasn't it? I expect we shall cross the river to-morrow."

So they chattered, while I, growing more and more drowsy, finally fell asleep to dream of glittering swords and levelled bayonets, of death-dealing artillery, of wild charge and stern defence, of glorious victory and sad defeat.

After breakfasting with my new friends I set out for Caserta, and was riding quietly along when a man in the uniform of the Guides stopped me.

He was one of those who had fought under the old "B. L.," and, saluting, he said, "I've been looking for you, captain. There's a dying man yonder, a Neapolitan, who has been calling your name all night. I'm afraid, though, he's gone by this time."

Guessing immediately that it was Carlo, I told the Guide to take me to him. The poor fellow lay on the ground mortally wounded. Our surgeons had bandaged his hurts, but they knew he could not recover.

"Just in time," said one. "He can't last another hour."

Going over to him, I knelt down and looked into his face. Utterly exhausted, he lay with closed eyes, and so still that one might have thought him dead. Presently his lips moved, and I heard him whisper my name.

"Carlo," I said, "Carlo, do you want me?"

The dying man's eyes opened and he looked earnestly into my face. He did not recognise me at first, but suddenly clutching my hand tightly, he exclaimed, "Howard! I must tell you! Quick, quick, Signor Carter is—is——"

I listened anxiously, but he never spoke again. His eyes burned with a wild light, the muscles of his throat twitched convulsively, the struggle to speak was choking him, his fingers gripped mine as a vice, a strange despairing cry broke through his half-closed lips—it was the last sound which passed them.

"Dead," said the surgeon reverently.

"Dead!" I echoed stupidly, gazing into the troubled face of the staunch young Royalist. What was the secret that had died with him? What had he tried so hard to tell me?

"Signor Carter is—is——" could I supply the missing word? My limbs shook: I trembled with fear. And Carlo, my old friend, had he played me false all along?

Standing there with bared head in the presence of death, I refused to believe it. Fanatical Royalist as he had ever been, he was no traitor!

I pictured him as he led the stormers against Castel Morone, and dropped a tear to his memory. Something important he had known, perhaps for a long time, something death had prevented him from telling.

The Lombards had pointed him out as a man seeking death. Well, he had found it; had fallen fighting bravely for his young king, and his secret had died with him.

I was turning sadly away, when the surgeon touched my arm.

"Pardon me," said he, "but the Royalist officer may carry papers which will explain what he tried to tell Shall I look?"

I had not thought of this, but the idea was feasible, and I gave permission for the search. The dead man's pockets contained but few treasures. One was the miniature of a sad-eyed woman, whom I took to be his mother, another a scrap of paper. On this was written, in not unfamiliar characters, "You are wrong. The *Cause* is first and last. To it *everything* must give way." Nothing more! Those few words alone came to me from the dead.

Restoring the picture to its resting-place, but keeping the paper as a memento of many strange events, I mounted my horse and rode thoughtfully away. Besides being really grieved at Carlo's death, his unfinished reference to the fate of my guardian distressed me terribly. My suspicions of foul play reviving, I built up possible and impossible theories to account for his strange disappearance, till my brain fairly whirled.

Happily, perhaps, at Caserta my comrades refused me time to brood. Having counted me among the dead, every one hastened to offer his congratulations on my escape, while the Chief himself spoke in such flattering terms that I was puffed up with pride and self-conceit.

At Caserta, too, Dicky paid me a visit. Having obtained a satisfactory view of the fight, he was in good humour, though pretending to grumble at my reappearance.

"A staff officer told me you were dead!" he exclaimed. "By this time the news is flashed all over England! I don't consider it fair to my proprietors! Look at the expense, and the waste of space in the paper! Very likely your name has been set up in large type!"

"Do you want me to go back and get killed properly?" I asked, laughing.

Dicky affected to hesitate.

"Well," he gravely said, "as a newspaper correspondent I'm a stickler for the truth; still, now I've got to know you——"

"You'll let me live?"

"Perhaps it will be best, especially as the campaign's nearly finished."

He was greatly interested in my account of Carlo's death, though putting a different construction to mine on his behaviour.

"I'm very much afraid," he said gloomily, "you will never see your guardian again; and that young Rugieri, you may depend on it, had a hand in his death."

I could not agree to this; positive proof alone would make me think Carlo guilty.

For three weeks we remained in our old lines, waiting for Victor Emmanuel's army, marching through the Roman states, to debouch into Neapolitan territory. The Royalists had retired towards the Garigliano—their last line of defence—where, in conjunction with

the Piedmontese, we expected to fall upon them. Our enforced delay made the troops impatient, but one night the welcome order was issued for Bixio's division to cross the river at dawn.

The Chief was unusually grave that evening, as if he had a foreboding of evil, and even the unopposed crossing of the Volturno failed to lighten his gloom.

Throwing 10,000 men into Capua, the Royalists disappeared, and we marched all that day without seeing one of the enemy. The next morning, as we prepared to start, an aide-de-camp sent forward at dawn galloped back with important information. The General immediately set spurs to his horse, and we of the staff cantered after him. Riding toward Teano, we reached a cottage where two roads crossed. Several of our officers stood looking down the road, and presently a burst of martial music announced the coming of the Piedmontese troops. As they advanced we dismounted and stood in a group behind the General, who received the salutes of the Piedmontese officers with a smiling face.

On they passed, plumes nodding, helmets shining, lances and sabres glittering in the sunlight, when suddenly the musicians struck up the Royal March, and men whispered eagerly to each other, "It is the king!"

A group of carabineers forming the Royal bodyguard came down the road at a trot, and then the stalwart monarch, dressed in general's uniform, riding a beautiful piebald Arab, and attended by a brilliant crowd of generals and staff officers.

It was a singular spectacle, rendered still more impressive by the contrast between the two men—

the crowned and uncrowned kings of Italy! The dear old General, utterly indifferent to personal appearance, had tied a handkerchief under his little pork-pie hat to protect his ears from the cold of the early morning, and had not removed it. Any other man would have looked ridiculous, but nothing could detract from the leonine nobility of Garibaldi's appearance. And Victor Emmanuel, though many hard words were soon said of him for his scurvy treatment of our hero, looked, I readily admit, every inch a soldier and a king.

So they met, these two, shaking hands in the presence of Red Shirts and regulars; and Garibaldi, turning to the crowd, cried in a loud voice, "Hail to the King of Italy!"

"*Viva il Re!*" we responded, but perhaps there was more warmth in our cheers for Garibaldi—the man who had made a King of Italy possible.

Drawing aside that the troops might pass, they remained chatting a few minutes and then rode on—the General on the left of the King.

The two staffs followed; we in our humble red shirts which had seen much service, the regulars in gaudy uniforms bright with stars and medals and flaunting ribbons.

Through a crowd of peasants, who, caring nothing for the Piedmontese monarch, greeted Garibaldi ardently, we rode, till, at the bridge which crosses the stream near Teano, our leader bade the king adieu.

We halted that night at Calvi, sleeping in a little church just outside the town. A strange inexplicable melancholy had come over us—a shadow of approaching evil. Not until the next morning did we know what had happened, when the General, in answer to

some remark, said sorrowfully, "They have sent us to the rear!"

This was the reward for our months of toil and privation and stern battling!

We had conquered Sicily, we had freed southern Italy from the Bourbon rule, we had braved every danger, had poured out our blood like water; now our services were no longer required! Angry murmurs broke from the groups of officers.

"They have sucked the orange dry," cried one, "and now they throw it away!"

"It is true! We have won Naples for Victor Emmanuel, and he casts us off like an old glove."

"If the General would but speak the word we would make Naples into a republic, and drive the Piedmontese into their own province."

"Who is Victor Emmanuel, that he should enjoy the fruits of our labour? Let us march on Rome, and then, driving the Austrians from Venice, make an Italian republic without Piedmont."

"The House of Savoy is nothing to us. Let Garibaldi be Dictator!"

These and many other angry words were spoken, but from the lips of the slighted Liberator there fell no syllable of reproach. Never, even at the height of power and victory, had he displayed such grand yet simple dignity. His great honest heart beat for Italy, and no personal affront could move him. He mourned for his volunteers—the gallant lads who had borne the heat and burden of the day; for himself he cared not at all. For the time his work was done. The country was not yet united. Rome remained to the Pope, Venice to the Austrians; but he had given

Naples to Victor Emmanuel, and the rest would follow.

So, for love of Italy he accepted without murmur or complaint the slight put upon him, and laboured to restrain the natural indignation of his soldiers as hard as ever he had done to defeat the Bourbons.

When Capua fell after a two hours' bombardment by the Piedmontese artillery we withdrew to Caserta, to take no further part in the dying war.

It could, of course, have but one end, and though King Francis stoutly defended his rocky fortress of Gaeta, it fell at length, and he was finally ousted from his dominions.

Concerning the fall of Gaeta, I know no more than can be gathered from the newspapers of the day, since by that time I had severed my connection with Italy.

It was, if I remember aright, November 6, 1860, when Garibaldi reviewed his troops for the last time. The king had promised to grace the ceremony with his presence, but failed to keep his word—a further slight, easily borne by men who cared more for Garibaldi than for all the royal princes in the world.

In all my life I have witnessed nothing so pathetic as that farewell in the grounds of Caserta. The rain poured down in torrents, but one hardly noticed it as the brave old Chief rode out to the front.

In this hour of bitterness men thought only of him whom they loved, of him for whom they would gladly have died a thousand deaths. I cannot hope to convey more than the faintest impression of the marvellous personal bond existing between the great Chief and his humblest follower.

To us he was not only a successful general but the

closest friend; a smile from him was the highest reward, a cold look unbearable punishment. And when he addressed us on that memorable day, when his well-known accents, trembling with emotion, fell on our ears, strong men broke down sobbing like little children.

It was over at last, and only one act remained to be performed before the final fall of the curtain.

We of the staff attended our leader, as next day he rode into Naples with Victor Emmanuel. The morning was dull, but the streets were thronged with sightseers. They cheered the king, but they cheered Garibaldi still more, and I, riding behind the carriage containing the two illustrious men, wondered how much all the applause was worth.

That same night I wished the hero farewell at his room in the Hotel della Bretagna. A few faithful friends had gathered under the same roof, anxious to be with him to the last, and they talked quite cheerfully of the future.

"The Chief goes now," said one, "but he will return. We shall meet again soon."

Garibaldi heard and looked round.

"Yes," said he, smiling, "we shall meet again on the path to Rome; at present we rest."

"It is time," said Menotti with an arch look at me, "to dig the potatoes we planted in the spring. Signor Howard, are you coming to do a little gardening?"

"No, thanks. The Chief's spades are too heavy."

There was a laugh at this, and Garibaldi beckoned me to his side.

"Have you heard any news of your guardian?" he asked.

"No, General."

"He has not been taken to Gaeta."

"Giovanni says not."

"Ah! where is Giovanni? I have not seen him for days."

"Are you speaking of Giovanni Rugieri?" asked Missori. "I understand he has disappeared. He has offended the Piedmontese in some way, and their agents are searching for him."

Calling for pen and ink, the Chief rapidly wrote a letter.

"It is to the king," he said. "I have asked him to do what he can for you. His spies may be more fortunate than mine. If there is anything further I can do, send to me at Caprera. Gentlemen, we rise with the dawn."

Wishing him good night, Menotti, Missori, and the rest withdrew, and then I also said farewell.

"*Addio!*" he exclaimed kindly, "keep up your courage; I feel sure that your guardian will yet be restored. Come to see me some day at Caprera; there will be always a welcome for one of the Red Shirts."

"Thanks, General! The invitation is a great honour."

"Nonsense, boy: come as my friend, and I will teach you how to farm."

Menotti, who waited outside, repeated his father's invitation, and several who formed part of the original thousand stayed to wish me success in my search.

Saying a final word of farewell I at length left them, intending to stay for the night at the hotel which I had been in the habit of using.

The night was dark, the rain beat down drearily, just

in keeping with my gloomy feelings. The separation from trusty comrades of several eventful months, the loneliness of my position, the uncertainty as to the fate of Mr. Carter, made me miserable, and I was glad to reach the hotel.

After supper I sat down to have a good think. The departure of Garibaldi for Caprera left me free, and I could now devote my energies to finding out the secret of my guardian's mysterious disappearance.

In a few days, too, Patsy, quite recovered from his wounds, would be in Naples, and he would help in the search.

Garibaldi's letter to the king might be of service, but first I would try the effect of private enterprise. Then a happy idea struck me. Why not enlist the aid of Francesco Poli?

He knew Naples as a scholar knows a book, and its biggest rogues were his own intimates. If there had been foul play outside the prison, Francesco was just the man to discover it. The notion seemed so good that I went to bed with a light heart, to dream that my guardian was already found.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COUNTESS SPEAKS

NAPLES awoke the next morning to find that the great Chief had departed. After a brief visit to the British ship *Hannibal*, he had gone on board the American merchantman *Washington*, which was even now swiftly speeding to the rocky island the hero called home.

Except for the lingering act being played at Gaeta, the drama had ended, the revolution was accomplished; by the votes of her citizens Naples was joined to Piedmont: to all intents and purposes Victor Emmanuel had become King of Italy.

After breakfast I wandered into the town, making my way down the Via Toledo, and keeping a sharp look-out for my rather disreputable acquaintance. The city was suffering from reaction, after the exciting events of the last two months. The tricolour of modern Italy, replacing the white flag of the Bourbons, floated from the public buildings, but the people took only a languid interest in things. The red shirt had lost the charm of novelty, the uniforms of a few Piedmontese troops aroused no enthusiasm. There had been a revolution: it was time to take things easily again. I traversed the street slowly, scanning the faces of the crowd, but failing to see Francesco.

While sauntering along, some one touched me on the shoulder, and I turned hastily.

"Pardon, signor, but are you not an Englishman named Howard?"

The man who spoke was a black-browed, black-bearded fellow, with swarthy complexion but not ill-looking features. He was dressed something like a servant, but more like a brigand, with a stiletto at his side and two huge pistols stuck in his waist-belt. Looking at him, I felt rather glad that the meeting was in a crowded street. However, I answered his question, telling him further that I belonged to Garibaldi's army. Scowling at the red shirt which I still wore, he gave me a note, saying, "Read, signor!"

There was no signature, but I recognised the handwriting. I had seen it on the scrap of paper taken from Carlo's pocket.

"The man who gives you this is my servant. Come with him. I have many things to tell you. Since you are no longer a volunteer, there is no danger."

I read the note carefully, and, folding it, placed it in my pocket.

What had the Countess to tell me? I remembered the comedy on the vessel, and wondered if this were a trap. I thought, too, of the awful dungeon in St. Elmo, and hesitated. Still, it was hardly likely that even the Countess would have me assassinated in broad daylight, so, tapping the hilt of my sword significantly, I bade the fellow lead the way.

The Countess probably had taken little pains to teach her servant politeness, or perhaps he kept a stock for home consumption alone; I can safely say he wasted none on me. Stalking along the Via Toledo he went, brushing man and woman aside roughly as if Naples were his private estate and the crowd tres-

passers. Most of the people, looking at his black scowling face, yielded without murmur; some muttered angry words; no one really barred his way. I followed at a moderate distance, not too closely, for really the boor's churlishness made me ashamed. I wondered what would happen if he were to encounter Francesco Poli, or Peppo the smuggler. In either case my friend with the beetling brows would find his swagger scarcely so effective.

At the corner of a side street he stopped, waiting for me, and a man seeing my red shirt raised a cheer, crying, "Down with the Bourbons!"

The next instant he must have regretted his indiscretion. My guide, gripping his waist, shook him roughly, and, uttering a savage exclamation, flung him bodily into the roadway. Truly the Countess showed great discrimination in her choice of servants!

Several women cried "Shame!" but my guide only deepened his scowl a little and passed on, no one attempting to hinder him.

In a short time I began to lose my bearings and to feel some trepidation as to my safety. The streets grew narrower, the houses more shabby, the people dirtier and more dissolute-looking. I certainly did not admire the neighbourhood which the Countess had chosen for her residence. To speak quite truthfully I felt afraid, and heartily wished myself well through the adventure.

I did not forget the incidents at Quarto, the narrow escape, through Carlo's influence, from the guarded house, and the attack on the carriage. Poor Carlo! He would never come to my aid again! However, for good or ill I was committed to this hazard and

could not retire without loss of self-respect, probably not at all. So, putting a bold face on the matter, I followed steadily, till the man, traversing a narrow passage, stopped at the door of a house in a deserted square.

This square had the appearance neither of squalor nor poverty. The buildings, five or six in number, were substantial and in good condition, though evidently belonging rather to the old world than the new. Two were apparently empty, and even the one at which we stopped gave no sign of being occupied. Knocking in a peculiar manner, my conductor was immediately answered. Then followed a drawing of bolts, a loosening of bars, the creaking of a huge lock, as if we sought admittance to some mediæval fortress.

The great door opened slowly, and we entered a flagged passage. Two men armed like my guide replaced the bolts and bars, while two others considerably covered me with their pistols. The man who had brought me spoke to them angrily. What he said I could not understand, but they lowered their weapons and looked rather foolish.

Plainly enough the house was the old-time residence of some noble Italian family. The spacious hall and the great staircase were of marble, beautiful statues adorned both, pictures by the old masters covered the walls, everything betokened wealth and luxury.

Mounting the staircase and passing through a wide corridor, we came to a door at which the man knocked. No one answered, but, in a few minutes, the door swinging open, we passed into a luxuriously furnished room. More rooms and corridors followed, till at length our journey ended in a small apartment in

which two women sat. On the instant my truculent companion became all smiles and complaisance, as, bowing low to the Countess, he told her his errand was accomplished.

She answered him kindly and with flattering words, at which his face flushed with pleasure, and he withdrew slowly, if possible more than ever the slave of his mistress. Then the Countess smilingly invited me to sit down, while her maid retired to the further end of the room.

"I thought you would come," she remarked. "You English are not cowards, though you have not much wit."

"The compliment may balance the taunt," I replied, "and as to my coming, why should I not?"

"Because there are six armed men below who would be glad to atone for their failure at Quarto."

At that I laughed, remarking that I had long since learned to make my hand guard my head. There was a spice of bravado in the remark, but I did not want her to think me afraid of her retainers.

"So the great robber has gone away?" she presently observed.

Pretending not to understand her allusion, I kept silence.

"I mean the brigand, Garibaldi. He and his friends drove away from the Hotel della Bretagna at dawn, slinking off like a parcel of thieves!"

"His work in Naples is done."

"He is a fool!" she exclaimed, curling her lips scornfully, "with no more brains than an Englishman! The Piedmontese have used him as a cat's-paw. He has pulled the chestnuts from the fire for them; now he is discarded like a worn-out servant!"

"That may be, but he has done his work all the same. He has made Victor Emmanuel King of Naples."

I was not prepared for the outburst which followed; the Countess raged like a tigress.

"Never!" she exclaimed fiercely, "Never! Do they think it? They are mistaken. We will not give them a moment's peace. Already the reaction has begun. All through the country men are arming. They will haunt the forests, the mountains. Piedmont will need an army in every district. But why do I tell you this? It is nothing to you. Why did you not go away with your friends?"

"Because my one friend is still here, and I am looking for him."

"Signor Carter?"

"Yes."

The mocking laughter left her eyes, and she looked troubled.

"It was on his account that I sent for you," she said at length. "I can no longer stay in Naples. It was easy to trick Garibaldi, but Cavour has eyes which see in the dark! I am going into the country to stir up rebellion."

"Yet in Sicily you posed as a patriot!"

"For the Cause. Everything gives place to that."

I drew from my pocket the folded scrap of paper stained with a tiny spot of Carlo's blood.

The Countess looked at it attentively and her face paled.

"You have seen Carlo?" she questioned.

"For the last time, signora."

"Is it—he is not——?"

"Dead!" I answered reverently. "He was killed in the great fight on the Volturno."

At first I thought she would faint, but, recovering herself, she said without a tremor, "Poor Carlo! He was a splendid soldier but a bad politician."

Having sat silent for some time, she remarked quietly, "Listen. I am about to tell you a strange story. Do not think I regret my share in what has happened. To me the independence of Naples comes before all things; but the strife with Garibaldi is over and you are not likely to offer your services to Victor Emmanuel."

"As soon as my guardian is found we shall return to England!" I exclaimed emphatically.

"I am sorry for Signor Carter, but he brought his misfortunes on himself. Why did he mix in our affairs? Was there no work for him to do in England? And he did no good; from the very first he was tricked. Do you remember the night the Royalist soldiers broke into your hotel?"

"Yes. My guardian and Giovanni Rugieri were arrested."

The Countess smiled. "You were already betrayed! The government knew all about the plot, even the names of the conspirators. They only wanted to get the actual signatures, which were in the packet you carried to Caprera."

"We foiled them in that, at all events!"

"Yes. It was badly managed. We failed again at Quarto through Carlo's quixotic honesty."

"And his father slipped through your fingers!"

At that the Countess broke into a peal of uncontrollable laughter.

"Giovanni was a clever rascal," she exclaimed, "and broke out of St. Elmo—when the gates were opened for him!"

I stood up and looked at her stupidly, hearing the words, but unable or unwilling to grasp their significance.

"The gates were opened?" I echoed.

She nodded brightly. "Giovanni was too useful for the farce to be kept up long," she said. "We had other work for him."

"Carlo's father?"

"Is the cleverest spy King Francis has! He wormed himself into Signor Carter's confidence, used his money to buy our soldiers rifles, arranged for his arrest, and sent me to get Garibaldi's papers from you!"

Even then the full meaning of the words did not come home to me! That Giovanni was a pretended patriot, a bogus victim of Bourbon tyranny, and an actual spy, seemed horrible. And the beautiful woman who told me these things showed no shame.

"All is fair in war!" she cried, "especially with an ungodly brigand like Garibaldi, and a crowned thief like Victor Emmanuel."

I asked if Carlo knew of his father's treachery.

"Yes, but Carlo had old-world notions of honour which were inconvenient," she said. "He was all for fighting in the open, and his father's——"

"His father's treachery broke the young fellow's heart!" I cried, remembering how resolutely he rushed on death.

"It is possible," the Countess admitted.

"And who bribed the wretched assassin at Palermo?"

"That was Giovanni's own affair. The government knew nothing of the attempt till it failed."

"Yet Carlo was branded as a murderer. Dozens of men will tell you to-day that Carlo Rugieri tried to assassinate Garibaldi."

The horrible injustice, the remembrance of my own doubts concerning the dead lad almost drove me wild, and I spoke bitter words of the absent Giovanni. The Countess waited patiently till the first heat of my anger cooled; then she said softly, "The scolding tongue, signor, is generally accounted a woman's weapon. Giovanni could not foresee that his son would suffer for the incident at Palermo. Indeed, Carlo was supposed to be with the army on the Volturno."

"And you, signora?" I said scornfully. She flushed with anger.

"Giovanni did not consult me," she cried hotly. "I am no advocate for murder, though no one would have rejoiced more had your great robber been slain on the battlefield. But all this is beside the purpose. Let me finish the story while there is yet time. You know the British minister complained of your guardian's imprisonment. It was necessary to release him."

"And he was released!" I interrupted.

"Yes, the government set him free in good faith. This did not suit Giovanni, who feared his victim might suspect and expose him. That was the reason—and a very plausible one—he gave me."

"But the truth?"

"Was very different. Giovanni long had the handling of your guardian's wealth. At first he used the position only to divert the money from the enemies to the defenders of our country. Afterwards

the temptation to enrich himself was too strong, and, instead of spending the money on the cause, he kept it."

"And he would not willingly let his milch-cow go?"

"He did not. Signor Carter walked unsuspectingly into the trap, and was spirited off to some unknown place. Carlo heard of it, and sent to warn you; only poor Peppo gave you the wrong packet."

Probably my face expressed the scorn I felt, for the Countess added defiantly, "I thought it was for the Cause."

"Then Giovanni cheated you?"

The beautiful eyes blazed with passion, and the Countess looked positively wicked as she cried hotly, "That is why I am telling you this!"

"Do you know where my guardian is hidden?"

"No. Giovanni did not trust me with that secret. I can only tell you he is kept prisoner somewhere, probably in the interior of the country. Of course you are going to seek him?"

I made a gesture of assent.

"Remember, in this case, there is not wisdom in numbers. The whole city is a hotbed of intrigue, and any man you meet may be a spy. Keep your own counsel as far as you can, and, when Giovanni is trapped, tell him who put you on his track."

I promised willingly enough, and with a word of farewell we parted, never to meet again.

The black-browed servant waited in the corridor, and conducting me to the Via Toledo, left me there. I wandered slowly toward my hotel, dazed by the black tale of treachery and deceit to which I had just listened. That Giovanni, who had posed as an ill-

used victim, was in reality a Bourbon spy had never entered my mind, yet the story just told explained many things. The crafty Neapolitan would have received short shrift had he come within my reach just then.

At the door of the hotel the landlord stopped me to say that a stranger—a foreigner of some kind—waited in my room. Instantly I thought of Patsy, and, running upstairs, found my dear old friend quite recovered, and looking as well as ever.

"So the old man has gone?" said he, after we had exchanged greetings.

"Yes, he went early this morning, and the volunteers are disbanded."

"Have you heard anything of Mr. Carter?"

"Nothing satisfactory," and sitting down I told him all that had passed since leaving Reggio.

"Poor old Carlo!" he said. "I'm sorry I misjudged him. What a wretched secret to carry about with him! No wonder he always looked so glum. That is why he skipped from Palermo."

"Yes. He was evidently afraid his father's true character would become known."

"Cunning chap, Giovanni! You had a narrow shave in that dungeon. So the Countess made no secret of her share in the business?"

"Not a bit. It's only because Giovanni fooled her that she has spoken now."

"Queer, how differently people view the same thing; however, we can't stay to moralise. What's your idea?"

"To hunt up Francesco Poli."

"Another scoundrel!"

"He can be trusted, though. Remember, he saved my life."

"All right. We'd better set to work at once."

"We'll change our dress first. I don't know whether the red shirt is popular in the slums."

"And a dig in the back with a knife wouldn't be pleasant after going all through the war. By the way, I didn't forget the 'B. L.' It's in the corner there."

"Thanks, I shouldn't like to lose the old rag."

My stock of money was long since exhausted, and Patsy had very little, but the proprietor of the hotel coming grudgingly to the rescue, we were able to buy some clothes less conspicuous than the volunteer uniform. Then, after an early dinner, we saw to our pistols, and prepared to start on our adventurous journey.

Judging from past experience in the Neapolitan slums the venture was full of risk, and I resolved first of all to try the principal thoroughfares. Accordingly we sauntered about among the crowd, but, in spite of a sharp look-out, I could see nothing of the man I sought.

"This reminds me of looking for a needle in a haystack," remarked Patsy. "We may continue this game for a month without success. I vote for making inquiries in the most likely quarter. Couldn't you find out the fellow's den?"

"I'm afraid not. The labyrinth of alleys is like a maze."

"We shan't do any good here."

We had stopped near the steps of a church, when suddenly there flashed on my mind the remembrance of the inn to which Francesco had taken me.

This was the very building where Francesco had received information from the beggar, and, casting back in my mind, I began to reconstruct the route from the inn to the church.

"Well?" said Patsy questioningly.

"I believe I can do it; but mind, we are taking our lives in our hands."

"All right; go ahead!"

So, turning from the broad crowded thoroughfare, we plunged boldly into the ill-lit side street which led to the heart of the Neapolitan slums.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MAN OF INFLUENCE

"JIMMY!"

"What is it?"

"You're a pleasant companion to go for a stroll with!"

"It isn't nice, is it?"

We had left behind the light and bustle of the main street. The narrow alleys through which we passed were dark and evil-smelling. The houses leaned against each other for mutual support. The people were dirty, ragged, and scowling. Men slunk by in slouched hats and torn cloaks, and it was not rare to catch a glint of the deadly stiletto.

Once a tall fellow ostentatiously barred our path, but, thinking better of it, allowed us to pass without molestation. Our apparel was not the most sumptuous, while our sole ornaments were the pistols we took care could be easily seen. Still, it was a demoralising journey. Every footfall put us on the alert, every second we expected to feel an inch of steel in our backs. Apparently the revolution had found work for some of the dwellers, as we met fewer folk than I had expected, which was perhaps fortunate.

At length, by great good fortune, we arrived at the hostelry, and passing through the main room entered the inner apartment. Half-a-dozen rough-looking

fellows stared at us curiously, but taking no notice I called for a bottle of wine, and we sat down at a little table. I had intended putting my question to the proprietor, but before he appeared one of the men, quitting his companions and crossing the room, said something we could not understand. As if to give us every chance he repeated his words, and, obtaining no reply, went back to his seat. At once the fellows began chattering among themselves in the same outlandish tongue, and, from the scowling glances cast in our direction, I realised we were in considerable danger. So did Patsy, and he slipped a pistol on the table.

"We're in a box, Jimmy," said he quietly. "Unless those chaps happen to know your amiable brigand we're done for. Better try 'em; it's the only chance."

The loud talk of the men suddenly ceased; they had apparently made up their minds what to do. It was now or never, and, without further hesitation, I jumped up. Instantly half-a-dozen pistols covered me, and a voice rang out in such Italian as I could understand, "Move, and you're a dead man!"

"Put your pistol down, Patsy," I whispered. "Peace at any price is our policy." Then I said aloud, "Gentlemen, I do not understand your conduct. We have done you no harm, and have come here simply on the chance of finding an old friend."

At this the men burst into a loud guffaw, and the leader said, "Look at us closely, signor; perhaps you will find him here—and perhaps not."

The others laughed at what they, no doubt, considered the speaker's pretty wit.

"No," I replied defiantly, "there's no need to look; my friend can meet his enemies on equal terms."

An ominous growl rose at this, but the spokesman, keeping his temper, said sneeringly, "Perhaps the signor will tell us the name of this hero?"

This was the moment of the test, and I devoutly hoped my talisman would not fail. Otherwise—it was only necessary to look at the sullen faces and flashing eyes to know what would happen. Putting our fate on the cast of a die, I exclaimed with assumed boldness, "There should be no need to whisper the name of Francesco Poli in this quarter of Naples."

I heard Patsy's sigh of relief as the weapons went down: the crisis was past. We were, however, not yet out of the wood.

"The friends of Francesco Poli are ever welcome here," said the leader, "but how can we know you are his friends?"

"By sending for him," I quickly answered.

The suggestion impressed them, and one of them left the room. Then, after talking to the inn-keeper, the chief proposed we should wait in an inner apartment, to which we consented.

"Meanwhile," he said confidently, "we shall keep watch. If your story be true there is nothing to fear; if not——" but there was no need to finish the sentence.

When he had gone, in spite of our serious position Patsy laughed.

"Careful Jimmy," said he banteringly. "What a splendid cicerone you'd make. Why, man, you've blundered right into the midst of one of those secret societies!"

"Looks like it!" I admitted ruefully. "However, Francesco will put things straight."

"I hope he will. Those confounded pistols made me nervous. You see, if one had gone off——"

"Well?"

"Why, you'd have gone off too!"

"Can't say I appreciate the joke."

"No? Want of education. You should cultivate humour. I wonder it isn't taught in the schools."

After that we sat silent for a bit, but Patsy soon broke out again.

"What a pretty pickle if this bandit chum of yours has gone and got hanged!"

"In that case," I replied, "I hope the gentlemen outside will all go to look for him!"

"Well done, Jimmy! You're improving; I shall make something of you after all."

"Listen! There's a fresh noise outside!"

"Perhaps your amiable brigand has come."

Presently the door opened, and, to my great delight, Francesco himself appeared. At first he did not recognise me, but when I spoke his face brightened and he remembered who I was.

"Good evening, Francesco. It seems a risky business looking you up."

The Neapolitan smiled. "My friends took you for spies," he said. "They are not accustomed to friendly visits from strangers."

"So it seems! But I have many things to say to you; can we talk here?"

There was a touch of pride in Francesco's answer, as he said, "As safely as in a king's palace."

"First let me introduce Signor O'Connor, my friend."

Francesco bowed. "Then I am his servant," said he, with a grave courtesy which astonished my chum.

"It is about Signor Carter," I began, when Francesco interrupted me.

"Have you not heard the news?" he said eagerly. "Your father" (I did not correct him) "has been set free."

"That was a trick, Francesco—a mere blind. He was shut up again the next day."

Looking at the Neapolitan, I felt glad he was not my enemy.

"I do not understand," he said slowly. "I myself took Giovanni Rugieri to the hotel, where everything was arranged for his departure."

"You were but one fool among many. Giovanni treated you as he did the rest; that is all."

Francesco's swarthy skin went a dirty yellow; his eyes blazed with anger.

"Giovanni cheated *me*?" he cried, and his unconsciousness alone saved his attitude from melodrama. Patsy drummed lightly on the table; I believe he already pitied the Bourbon spy.

"Listen," I said calmly. "Giovanni has played two parts; has looked out at the world with two faces. To me he was a Garibaldian; to others——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Francesco impatiently, "I know that; but Signor Carter, what of him?"

"You shall hear;" and forthwith I told him the story, just as I had it from the Countess.

I have pictured the scene hundreds of times since then—the bare, mean-looking room, Patsy softly beating on the table, the Neapolitan sitting on the edge of the chair with his long lean neck outstretched, his face thrust nearly into mine, his eyes burning like two live coals. He made no gesture; he uttered no sound; he was as still as a statue. For several seconds after I

had finished, he maintained his statuesque attitude, making me feel quite nervous.

"Well?" I exclaimed, unable longer to bear the tension, "what do you think of it?"

His hand was unconsciously playing with his knife.

"I think," he said slowly, "that Giovanni Rugieri never did a worse day's work!"

"Then you will help me to rescue Signor Carter?"

He sat and stared, unheeding my question.

"Pardon," said he presently, "I had forgotten you had an interest in this business. Your father was kind to my little one: I would spend my life to help him; but there is something further. Giovanni is one of us, and he has broken his oath. It is my duty to find him. Where he has gone I know not, but in less than twenty-four hours my comrades will have discovered his hiding-place. You stay at the same hotel? Good. To-morrow night be in readiness. Now, come, I will see you safely through the streets, otherwise you might find a difficulty."

As we went out Francesco spoke to several of the men, who, rising at once, disappeared. Our guide had lost little time in setting his machinery in motion. Perhaps it was well that he escorted us, as the night had grown dark, the streets were unrecognisable, and more than one slouching figure rising suddenly from the gloom was prepared to inquire into our business. At a word from Francesco the eerie figure vanished as mysteriously as it had risen. At length, emerging into the Via Toledo, our guide stopped.

"You are safe now," he exclaimed, "and I have much to do. Until to-morrow night!" and he, too, went away noiselessly and ghost-like.

"Jimmy," said my chum as we reached my rooms, "I'm not a nervous chap, but that bandit of yours made me feel creepy. Who is he?"

"I don't know, except that his word is law in the slums. Did you see his face when he spoke of Giovanni?"

Patsy positively shivered. "I've never met Giovanni," he said, "but I pity him when this wer-wolf gets on his track!"

"If we find my guardian we'll ask Francesco to let the traitor go free."

Patsy shrugged his shoulders. "We'll see what to-morrow night brings forth," he said, evidently putting little faith in the Neapolitan's humanity.

Having nothing to do the next morning we stayed in bed late, so that midday had arrived when we sat down to breakfast.

"What's that?" asked Patsy about half-way through the meal. "Another revolution or an earthquake?"

"It sounds," I replied, "suspiciously like Teddy Mackworth."

It was indeed he, and we could hear him saying, "Lend me your handkerchief, Tarleton, mine's wet through. Fancy our grief being turned into joy! And such joy! Tarleton, hold me up; I wish I hadn't such a sensitive nature." Then, in quite a different tone of voice, "Here, I say, you beggar, stop that pinching or I'll drop you over the stairs!"

The rascal, supported by Tarleton and Dicky-bird, appeared at the door and stood gazing at me in ecstatic joy.

"It is he! Our own Jimmy!" he cried joyfully.

"Better identify him," replied Tarleton, drawing a newspaper from his pocket and reading aloud.

"The decisive moment had arrived, and the General gave the word for the cavalry to charge. The order was carried by Captain Howard, who, with the daring recklessness that has distinguished him throughout the campaign, rode side by side with the colonel. The bugles rang out, the squadrons moved forward at a trot, broke into a gallop, and, with the young Englishman well ahead, dashed straight at the foe. The first to pierce the hostile mass, Captain Howard, with magnificent pluck, flung himself into the forest of lances. The charge was completely successful, the Royalists broke and fled, but alas! the victory cost the life of our gallant young compatriot, who, "fighting gloriously," fell."

I shook my finger reprovingly at the abandoned Dicky-bird, who laughed gaily.

"And this," Teddy exclaimed in approved melodramatic style, "is the account of an eye-witness!"

"How did I know the chap was shamming?" asked Dicky-bird mournfully. "I told him he had no business coming to life again."

"Some people," murmured Tarleton lazily, "have no sense of shame."

"Look at Patsy," said his chum. "He seems to be doing pretty well for an invalid, eh? What a pair of humbugs they are!"

Of course they were anxious to hear our adventures, which we related amidst a running fire of chaff; while they in turn told how Dicky, just down from the front, had brought news of my safety.

"At which," Tarleton remarked in parenthesis, "we rejoiced exceedingly."

"Because," said his chum, taking up the parable,

"it was good for a day's leave. The 'old man'—otherwise his captain—"behaved handsomely. 'Mack-worth,' said he——"

"Stow that, Teddy, we can guess the rest."

Presently my guardian's name was mentioned, and the fun was hushed while I told how shamefully he had been deceived and treated. Of course our three friends eagerly offered to join the expedition for his rescue, and we made Dicky happy by agreeing that he should come.

"There's really nothing moving up at Gaeta," he said, "except cannon-balls, and watching them grows monotonous."

Naturally it was impossible for the others to stay away from their ship, and especially to go on such a dangerous errand.

"It's a pity, too," said Teddy reflectively. "In a case of this kind a man of my experience——"

A roar of laughter prevented the rest of the sentence from being heard, and Patsy proposed we should take a stroll in the town. He said he was afraid lest Teddy's gas should blow the roof off.

In such company time sped rapidly by, and after a most enjoyable afternoon we returned to the hotel for dinner.

"I suppose," said Teddy, "if the trip's successful, you'll clear out of Italy?"

"Yes, we shall return to the old country. I've had about enough of revolutions."

"So have I," remarked Patsy. "This is my last adventure—for a time, at least. How long does the *Onyx* stay here?"

"Depends on circumstances," Teddy replied loftily.

"I suppose we shall have to safeguard British interests till the squabble ends. There was a rumour yesterday of our moving up to Gaeta."

As Francesco was not likely to arrive till late, we accompanied our naval friends, after dinner, to the ferry of Santa Lucia, where their boat was waiting.

"Good-bye," said Teddy as he stepped in. "Don't forget to let us know how the affair ends. I wish we were coming with you."

"Don't break the pitcher at the last drawing," advised Tarleton. "It would make a poor ending after all you've gone through."

"Never fear," I replied. "We'll look after ourselves."

The boat was pushed off, the men gave way, and our two potential admirals of the fleet were speeding toward their ship. When they could no longer be distinguished, we walked slowly back to the hotel. The fun was over, and our faces grew serious as we began to contemplate the risky business before us. Wherever he had taken refuge, Giovanni was hardly likely to submit without a struggle.

While Patsy proceeded upstairs with Dicky-bird, I went to tell the landlord of my expected visitor.

On entering our room I found Patsy examining his pistols.

"It's always well to have one's weapons in order," he said brightly.

Having got everything ready, we sat impatiently awaiting our guide. The evening drew to a close, the street noises lessened and finally ceased, the lights in the hotel were put out, the inmates retired to rest; only the night-watchman moved.

"He ought to be here by now," Patsy said, looking at his watch.

"Perhaps Giovanni has given him the slip," suggested Dicky. "Left the country or shut himself up in Gaeta."

"Francesco will track him down in any case. Listen! there's some one at the door now."

Going out on the landing and looking over the stairs, I whispered, "Is that you, Francesco?"

"Yes, signor; I am coming," and mounting with noiseless steps, he reached the corridor.

By the light which the lamp in the room threw on his features, I saw that he brought good news.

"You have discovered him?" I asked.

"He is at Castelupo, on the ridge of the mountains. The district is up in arms. The Cafones, urged by their priests, have hoisted the white flag. It will make our business awkward."

"Who are the Cafones?"

"The peasants. They are most ignorant men, and outside my influence."

"How are we going to manage?"

"To traverse the district by force would require an army. My plan is to proceed singly or in twos; to meet at a certain rendezvous, rescue your father, and scatter again."

"Have you any men?"

"A dozen. More would be at once too many and too few."

"And we are three."

The Neapolitan looked doubtfully at Dicky.

"Does the signor know it is a matter of life and death?" he asked. "Not all who go from Naples will return."

"You can trust him. He is English, and full of pluck."

"As you will; only remember we are not going on an excursion of pleasure."

Examining our weapons with approval, he suggested that we should provide ourselves with food, as Castelupo would not be reached till the following night. At the last moment he said, "We must wait, signor, I have only brought two extra horses; we must find a third."

"There is no need. Those will do for my friends; mine is in the stable."

"Then we will start at once."

Putting out the lights we crept quietly down the stairs, and when outside Francesco whistled softly. Immediately a horseman leading a spare horse came up, and to him our guide transferred Patsy, who with a whispered adieu rode off. A second took charge of Dicky, and then Francesco accompanied me to the stables.

"I hope your animal is in good condition," he said anxiously. "It is possible you will have to trust him with your life."

"I will cheerfully do that."

By the light of a lantern we adjusted saddle and bridle, and then I led the beautiful creature out. Bidding me wait for him, my guide disappeared, returning shortly on horseback, and together we rode away into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII

MAN-HUNTING

FRANCESCO being leader of the expedition, I had not cared to oppose his plans, but all the same I felt sorry at being separated from my two chums. It was a dreary ride in the darkness and silence, for the Neapolitan rarely spoke, and then only in warning or to give some needed direction. How he found his way was simply marvellous!

Throughout the night hours we rode at a steady pace, without the slightest hesitation. Now turning to right or left, again keeping straight on, sometimes with the high-road beneath our horses' hoofs, at others climbing or descending a rocky path, we pursued the journey till at length dawn broke with its welcome light.

By this time Naples lay far in our rear. I was in an unknown country; both scenery and people had entirely changed their characteristics.

Almost at the first streak of dawn we met a straggling group of peasants in goat-skin sandals and sugar-loaf hats. They were by no means handsome, having flat noses, high cheek-bones, and shocks of thick waving hair. Their eyes were dull, but most of their faces betrayed a certain low cunning. Some of them carried spades and pickaxes, but each man was armed with knife and gun. Turning a bend in the

road we came upon them unexpectedly, and before they could recover from their surprise Francesco shouted something unintelligible to me, but which the peasants understood perfectly. Returning his salute, they stood aside to let us pass, which we did quickly.

"An awkward encounter!" muttered the Neapolitan, drawing rein a couple of hundred yards further on. "When the leader is so careless, what can be expected of the men? By your leave, signor," and, reaching over, he pinned to my arm a white linen band.

"A party badge?" I asked.

"It may keep off inquisitive people. You saw those men? They are Cafones going to work."

"With knives and guns?"

"They will hide those and produce them only when able to do mischief. Had you been wearing your red shirt you would be dead now."

"Very pleasant, I'm sure!"

"It would be better than being made prisoner! The Cafones are very cruel."

Before this I had not fully realised the danger into which we were running; now the gravity of the situation became clear. Every step we took put us further into the power of Giovanni, who, as a rabid Bourbon, would have the greatest influence over these peasants. If by any chance he discovered us we should almost certainly lose our lives, as the Cafones would cut off our escape. Now I saw, too, what Francesco had meant by the need of an army to force a passage! The country became tremendously hilly, and the only practicable roads were completely commanded by rocky heights which the hardy mountaineers could seize at their pleasure.

If at any time they should be beaten, they had but to scatter and meet again at some previously appointed spot.

Francesco, who had now fastened a linen badge to his own arm, gave me a further word of caution.

"It will be well," said he, "not to speak if you can avoid it. I will do the talking."

"All right. I'll leave everything to you. I hope our friends haven't come to grief."

"They are all picked men who know what is before them."

About eight o'clock we reached an inn at the bottom of a steep ascent, and here my guide resolved upon making a halt. As it chanced there were no customers in the place, nor during our stay did we see any one beyond the inn-keeper and his wife—an ancient pair, but glib of tongue, and full of bitter hatred towards the new order of things. Their *patois* was very difficult for me to understand, but Francesco was able to enter freely into the conversation.

"A pretty prospect for the new king if these are specimens of his subjects," he remarked when we were alone. "According to the old man the Cafones have vowed death to every soldier who enters the mountains. He and his wife are delighted, and, despite their age, anxious to do something for the good cause."

"It is to be hoped their wishes won't take the form of cutting our throats!"

"We are safe here for a couple of hours; then we must be moving," said he, smiling grimly.

Our colleagues were probably making their way without arousing suspicion, for we neither saw nor

heard the least sign of them. On first stopping we had, of course, seen to the horses; now Francesco proposed I should have a nap.

"There is no evil like want of sleep," he declared; "even if you get but half-an-hour you will feel the benefit."

"Why not take your own medicine?"

"Because I have trained my constitution to do without. To-morrow or the next day, whenever we return to Naples, I shall sleep soundly, but not now."

Accordingly I lay down on the hard bench and slept peacefully till Francesco awakened me.

"It is time to go," said he. "The Cafones will be finishing work."

In order to give me longer rest he had stretched the point very fine, and the yard before the inn was already blocked by peasants returning from the fields. At first they regarded us suspiciously, but, reassured by seeing the white strips on our arms, their faces grew less black. As to Francesco, I gladly admit that to his coolness and presence of mind I was indebted for my life. He was certainly a fine actor; while danger only brightened his intellect. Honestly, this awkward meeting was very unpleasant to me, but Francesco carried it off with an easy assurance which compelled my admiration. Remembering his advice, I did not speak, but left him to ask or answer necessary questions.

"That's a piece of good fortune," he said as we finally rode away. "Now I can depend on the safe arrival of the carriage."

"The carriage?"

"For your father. After his long imprisonment he

may not be in the best of health. One must consider everything."

"And you have provided a vehicle?"

"It follows us, and these fellows will let it pass. I have explained that it is coming for the Bishop of Carproso, whose word is law to them."

"A capital idea," I said, relapsing into silence. In truth, the more I saw of this business the riskier it seemed.

In the first place my guardian would no doubt be zealously watched, and even if we succeeded in rescuing him it would be almost impossible to run the gauntlet of these morose peasants. Still, I put great faith in Francesco, and, as always, something must be left to chance.

Twice during the afternoon we stopped in unfrequented districts to rest our horses, evening beginning to draw in after the second halt. This suited our purpose nicely, as Francesco did not wish to join the others of our little party before dusk. A couple of travellers might not attract attention, but sixteen men fully armed surely would. Suddenly my companion reined up.

"Do you see those lights in the distance, high up? That is Castelupo, where Giovanni has taken refuge."

"And our men?"

"Are in the gorge yonder, where the road crosses."

We rode on slowly in the gathering gloom, and, going a long way round to throw any possible watchers off the scent, approached the gorge. All at once there came a low, half-whispered "*Chi va là?*" to which Francesco replied, and we found ourselves the next instant among our friends. All had not yet come in,

Dicky and his guide being amongst the missing ones; but Patsy was there, and very glad we were to meet again. Seeing the white band on my arm he held up his own, saying, "A nice badge for two Red Shirts, eh?"

"It has saved my life to-day! I wonder where Dicky is?"

"Haven't seen him since we left Naples. This brigand of yours is a regular general."

"Here he comes! Well, Francesco, what is it?"

"I am going up the hill to reconnoitre. Meantime I want you to stay here quite quietly. Should the Cafones learn anything now, the game is up!"

"Can't I come with you?"

"Better not. By myself I can manage."

"A broad hint that, Jimmy," said my chum, with a quiet chuckle.

After giving directions to one of his men Francesco disappeared, leaving us to wait in anxiety and suspense. Two of the men kept guard over the horses, several others did sentry duty, the remainder, hiding behind rocks and boulders, crouched with loaded pistols in readiness for danger.

An hour passed with hardly a sound to break the stillness, when to my great relief Dicky and his guide arrived, very tired but still full of pluck.

"Both here?" he exclaimed. "That's capital! I began to think the fellow was taking me to the Adriatic."

Another hour passed. The night had set in dark. We could see nothing, and hear nothing save the heavy breathing of our animals.

A whispered "*Chi va là?*" just above our hiding-

place announced the presence of some one, and almost directly Francesco was among us.

"Your friend has come? That is good. Now we wait only for the carriage. I have found the house. It is guarded, but there is a way in. If no accident happens we shall succeed."

"But the carriage can't come up here?"

"No, it will stay on the roadside at the bottom. I am going now to look for it."

After what appeared an age of waiting he returned and briefly explained his plans. Directly my guardian was found we Englishmen were to take him to the carriage, mount our horses and get away at top speed, while Francesco and his men covered our retreat.

"In that way we leave all the danger to you, which isn't fair."

"There is no other way. Caught among these hills you will be killed for certain. Should the worst happen, we can disperse. Besides, you forget, I have my own account to settle with Giovanni."

"If we succeed, could you not show mercy and let Giovanni off?"

"He has broken the oath of his order, signor. You do not understand our Italian customs. Nothing could save his life now. Even if he escaped us the work would be begun by others. There is no spot on the habitable globe in which he could dwell securely."

I thought to renew my appeal, but, regarding his answer as final, Francesco walked away to issue his directions.

"Save your breath to cool your porridge," whispered Patsy. "If your amiable brigand would let the fellow off, these other chaps wouldn't. They haven't come up here altogether on Mr. Carter's account."

"The one with me doesn't care a straw for Mr. Carter," Dicky remarked. "He has been sharpening his knife for the special benefit of this gentleman with the two faces. It's a horrible kind of thing, but there's a germ of rough justice in it."

"Anyhow we can't alter it one way or other," added Patsy, and much against my wish I was obliged to agree with him.

At length all was in readiness. Four men stayed with the horses, the rest of us followed our leader up the gorge in single file. It was impossible to preserve strict silence in the darkness. Here a man stumbled over a sharp rock; there, giving way beneath our feet, loose stones went clattering down the sides. Then the long file would halt, lying like some half-mythical serpent ready to spring. No man spoke, but I could not help wondering what we should do if the Cafones, closing the mouth of the gorge, attacked us.

However, we went on unopposed, continually climbing till we reached the summit on which Castelupo was built. Night hid the village from view, but here and there a light shone, showing the position of some of the houses. A last word of caution passed from man to man, and then we set out, silently skirting the abyss, to slip over which meant death. After about a hundred yards of this dangerous travelling Francesco stopped again, in front of the road.

"The house is yonder," said he, "where the lamp burns. It is surrounded by a wall which Alberto and I will climb. When we have opened the gate I will send for you. Cross the road one by one and make no noise."

Detaching themselves from us, the two were at once

swallowed up in the darkness. Slowly the minutes dragged by, each seeming an age, while we waited with straining ears to catch a sound. Presently there came the light tap, tap, of feet, and a man's hand brushed my face. Fortunately I did not cry out.

"It is I, signor. Francesco waits. You and your English friends will go with him. I will see to the rest."

"Very good, Alberto. Ready, you fellows? Come on, then, after me."

"Three or four yards to the left of the light, signor. The gate is open."

"Thanks!"

Stealing cautiously forward and bearing a trifle to the left, I crossed the road, blundering straight into Francesco's arms. My two chums followed at short intervals, and, without waiting for the others, the Neapolitan led us to the side of the building.

"Above us," he whispered, "is a grated window. I have been up and filed the middle bar, so that we can squeeze through. Give me your hand. Feel; this is a spout which you must climb. I have tied a white cloth round it on a level with the window. When you reach this mark stretch out your right hand and grope for the bars. I shall be there to pull you through."

"It seems simple enough," remarked Patsy, and though I could not see his face I knew he was smiling broadly. However, there was neither time nor opportunity for talking. Francesco climbed the spout with the agility of a cat, making no more noise. Then Patsy planted his feet firmly on the ground, and we formed a ladder, with Dicky at the top. Getting a firm grip of the piping, our plucky friend climbed the rest of the distance, and we heard him strike the wall as he swung

to the window. It was my turn next, and I arrived safely but somewhat blown at the white mark. Dicky, improving on Francesco's idea, fluttered his handkerchief from the window, and, thus guided, I soon got hold of the bar. The next move was not so easy, and but for Francesco I should have tumbled headlong to the ground. Luckily he grasped my collar, and with Dicky's help pulled me through just as Patsy reached the white mark. My chum caught the bar all right, but, slipping as he squeezed through, fell inside with a crash.

"Quick!" cried Francesco, "that will rouse them. Two of you make your way to the front door and let Alberto in. Signor Howard, come with me."

Dicky promptly struck a match, and the light showed us we were in a little box-like room, the door of which was shut. Unfortunately it was also locked, but Patsy took a running kick and smashed the panel.

Along the passage my two chums raced, rushed down the staircase, and soon we heard the tramp of feet as Alberto's men entered. Francesco and I, hurrying to the left, encountered a man half dressed and carrying a lantern. With the spring of a tiger-cat the Neapolitan leaped on him, threw him down, and pressed the fellow's bare chest with his sharp knife.

"Where is the English signor?" cried he fiercely. "Quick! I count five and you are a dead man! One, two, three——"

I had snatched up the lantern and held it so that the light fell on Francesco's face. The very dullest boor that ever lived could not have failed to see its deadly earnestness.

"Four!" there was a twitching of the knife.

"He is below," muttered the man morosely.

"Good. If we find him you shall live."

"Whizz!" and, crashing past us, a bullet embedded itself in the opposite wall. Springing to his feet, the man was off like a shot, while his comrades fired at us over his head. Giovanni's bodyguard was earning its wages!

But now Alberto's followers trooped up, and Francesco bade me find my guardian. Taking the lantern I ran along the corridor, turned back my chums, and bundling over the stairs reached the ground floor. Four men stood on guard at the front door, and leaving them we ran into what appeared to be the kitchen.

"He's down here somewhere!" I said excitedly. "We must find him quickly, or it will be too late."

Upstairs the fight continued fiercely, and I felt sure the noise would arouse the village, so whatever we did must be done at once. With more leisure we might have searched with less vandalism. Patsy had seized a huge axe, with which he crashed in every door that would not open. Toward the back of the house we came to a second staircase, evidently leading to the rooms where the fight raged.

Thus far our efforts were unavailing, and I began to despair, when Dicky, who had lit a torch, cried out in triumph, "Here, you fellows! Here is a door in the wall! Bring the axe, Patsy. Well hit! Now, again! Hurrah! Don't break your neck! Come on, Jimmy! It's awfully steep!"

The warning not to break our necks was needed. The flight of steps was almost perpendicular, but we were at the bottom in a trice. Using his axe again, Patsy opened a second door, and we rushed like a troop of wild Indians into the apartment beyond.

What we saw will be told in the next chapter,

CHAPTER XXVIII

A RATTLING GOOD RIDE

DICKY had dropped his torch, and I my lantern, but the room was lit by a tall candle. There was nothing dungeon-like in the appearance of the room. It was spacious, fairly lofty, and comfortably if sparsely furnished. But the great feature of interest was the man who stood in the centre of the apartment. Evidently roused by the commotion, he had lit the candle and dressed; now he stood confronting us with that calm air of confidence which never forsakes the really brave man.

"Mr. Carter!" I cried joyfully, while my chums uttered a whoop of triumph.

"Jim!"

"Come on, sir!" called out Patsy. "We haven't a moment to spare! The place will be up in arms soon!"

"Don't stay to finish dressing!" said Dicky. "Come on anyhow. What an awful rumpus they're making above."

My guardian had only just grasped the glad truth—and one might well excuse him for feeling somewhat dazed—when there was a quick rush over the steep steps, and a dark figure bounded into the room. In a flash I recognised Giovanni and covered him with my pistol. I could have finished him at



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one shot, yet a feeling of probably misplaced pity prevented me. His face looked ghastly in the candle-light, his head was bleeding, his eyes shone with unnatural brilliancy. I felt glad that his death could not be placed to my account, though Patsy bluntly said that my weakness cost the lives of much better men. That, however, is neither here nor there. The fact remains that, having the power to kill the man who had wrought such mischief, I let him go.

Before either of the others could take aim Giovanni knocked the candle over by a well-directed blow, plunging us into darkness. At the same moment a fierce shouting was heard, and a number of men dashed into the room. Foremost was Francesco, yelling lustily for a torch, but striking a match Dicky relit the candle. I looked eagerly round. Giovanni had vanished.

"He came this way!" cried one.

"I saw him make for the steps!" cried another.

"The man was in this room a minute ago," said Patsy. "He knocked out the light and bolted."

Francesco's lip curled contemptuously. I divined his thought. Three armed men could not stop a frightened fugitive! Then catching sight of my guardian he cried, "It is the English signor! Quick, take him away! The carriage, quick! The village is up, the house will be surrounded."

"And you?" I asked.

"I will come when Giovanni is caught. Till then all the Cafones on the mountains shall not move me. Scatter, men! Search the room; there must be a trap somewhere. Signor, are you mad? Go, I say, while there is yet time. Go, go, if you wish to save your father's life!"

That appeal was irresistible. Taking Mr. Carter's arm I led him to the shattered door, while Francesco and his men examined the apartment with torch and candle. Truly it is the first step which is of importance!

We went slowly and with unwilling feet, but once outside we hurried up the steps, through the wrecked rooms, past the guards, and so into the village street. Thus far my guardian had kept up well, but in the fresh air his strength failed, and he hung like a leaden weight on my arm. Francesco had not exaggerated; the village was wide awake. Lights burned in the houses, fires blazed on the hills, serving as warning beacons far and wide; men carrying torches ran in the roadway, asking each other the cause of the tumult.

While Dicky went forward to find the gorge, Patsy and I got my guardian along somehow, expecting every moment to be discovered. Once we stopped to get breath, and looking back I saw the torches thick in the roadway, dancing this way and that, now high now low, darting to the brink of the cliffs, to the thresholds of the buildings, as the men pursued their search. It had a weird effect in the gloom, this zigzag, uneven procession of broad flaring red tongues, now united in a mass, again separated into distinct ribbons of flame.

But sight-seeing was not down in our programme, and having recovered wind we went on again, our plucky little chum crying softly in the distance that he had found the gorge. By this time the hill-fires were leaping high for miles; it was evident the Cafones at Castelupo, becoming alarmed, believed it to be occupied by Piedmontese soldiers. Bugle

answered bugle from cliff to cliff, and muskets were discharged at random, perhaps in the hope of drawing the unseen enemy's fire. These mountaineers made plucky combatants, and they clearly intended to fight hard for their rocky lands.

My heart almost failed as we entered the gorge. My guardian still hung like a dead weight on our arms, and the Cafones, no doubt in accordance with some previous plan, lined the cliffs. The ascent had been difficult; the return was absolutely dangerous. In places it was impossible to proceed three abreast, and in some spots we were obliged to go in single file, holding my guardian up between us. Presently the shouting and confusion on the hillside ceased, the glow of the torches disappeared, everything became as silent as the grave.

"Listening for sounds," whispered Patsy.

Alone, even, we should have found it difficult to descend without noise; now the stones went clattering down the hillside, making as much tumult as a miniature earthquake.

The Cafones heard and fired a volley, harmlessly, though some of the bullets struck the rocks too closely for comfort. Willing to save Dicky's life, I asked him to run on and make sure of the horses, but, seeing through my plan, he called back, "I shall be there in time for you!"

Patsy laughed quietly. "You won't get rid of him like that!" said he, and I did not try again.

Another clatter of loose stones brought a second volley upon us, but again no one was hit. Still, it was not nice to see the jets of flame and to hear the ping of the bullets close to one's head. However, we

progressed steadily, making as little noise as possible ; stopping occasionally to rest, and dodging under cover each time the Cafones gave a fresh salute.

"They're following us down," said Patsy. "They'll close the mouth of the gorge."

"If they do, we're lost !"

We had nearly reached the bottom when a man came tearing down the defile in our rear. Instantly Patsy cocked his pistol and called on the stranger to halt.

"Is that you, signor ? Don't stop me, I am carrying orders from Francesco. We have caught the traitor, and they are now trying him."

The fellow ran on and we followed, marvelling at the Neapolitan's audacity. In the midst of foes, with the house surrounded and the hills held by savage men, to linger for the purpose of trying a prisoner appeared the height of impudence.

"A short trial, and a shorter shrift, I warrant !" was Patsy's comment, and I agreed with him.

Just about this time my guardian began to revive, some of the strain was taken off our aching muscles, and we walked a little more quickly. A whisper from Dicky warned us we were approaching the horses : the critical moment had almost arrived. Was the mouth of the gorge closed ? On the answer to that question depended our fate.

Leaving my chums to bring the animals, I pushed on with Mr. Carter, giving a sigh of relief as we entered the high-road. A low whistle was answered by another, and hastening in the direction of the sound I found the carriage, with a pair of horses pawing the ground impatiently. Helping the invalid

in, I closed the door, when my chums arrived with the unpleasant news that Dicky's horse was gone dead lame.

There was no time to be lost. "Leave it behind and jump into the coach," I cried. "Keep your pistols handy! Patsy and I will ride in front. Now, driver, don't spare the horses, and stop for nothing! Do you understand?"

"All right, signor. But look out, the peasants are in the road!"

He was right. Too late to block the gorge, the Cafones were cutting off our retreat. Patsy was already in the saddle. I mounted, and, with a yell of defiance, we dashed right into them. It was a desperate venture, but the nature of the case demanded a heroic remedy. Crash we went into them, emptying our pistols right and left, and then laying about us with our swords. Behind us thundered the carriage, rolling, swaying, yet shooting forward at a terrific rate, while Dicky, standing up, sent bullet after bullet into the midst of the crowd.

The whole affair lasted only a few seconds, when, to the music of yells from the foe and the rattle of shots, we were through. Patsy and I at once dropped to the rear, while the carriage horses, maddened by the tumult, took the bits between their teeth and bolted. The pace was too hot to last long, but for a time we strove in vain to overtake the flying vehicle. How the terrified animals guided themselves in their headlong flight I know not, for the road twisted and turned repeatedly, making it difficult even for us to steer safely.

We soon outdistanced the Cafones, but, as the whole

district bristled with armed men, the danger was by no means over. Another hill stretched before us, steep and rocky, down which the carriage thundered amidst a shower of bullets and fireworks composed of burning cartridges. It was a running of the gauntlet which I did not admire! As we reached the straight, Patsy gave a sharp cry of pain, and at the same instant a bullet tore a hole through my cap. The carriage was still going at express speed, but now an incline fronted the horses, and half-way up they dropped into a walk.

By this time dawn was breaking, and we began to see a little of the surrounding objects. The carriage had come to a standstill, and riding up, we saw Dicky climbing into the driver's seat.

"The poor chap's hit," he explained. "Help me put him inside. I'll take the reins."

"Make haste!" cried Patsy. "Those fellows are trying to head us off again!"

Jumping down, I helped Dicky with the unfortunate driver, had a look at my guardian, who was quite sensible though weak, and remounted.

"Awfully sorry," said my chum as we followed the carriage, "but I couldn't get down very well, my arm's broken."

"Poor old Patsy!" I exclaimed with grief, yet unable to do him the slightest good.

"Look out! We're in for it now!"

The growing dawn, though enabling us to realise more clearly our peril, was all in favour of our enemies, who lined the top of the hill and awaited us with loaded guns. One little matter afforded ground for satisfaction. The enemy, instead of concentrating their fire on the carriage horses, were taking

aim at us. It was, of course, false policy, but I did not feel inclined to grumble.

"Hadn't we better go first?" suggested Patsy. "If they shoot our horses, there's the carriage; but if they bring down either of Dicky's pair, then it's good-bye to everything! They'll simply smother us."

The advice was good, as the Cafones would undoubtedly let fly at us, thus giving our amateur Jehu a better chance. So, on either side we passed the vehicle, and gave Dicky a cheer, while I fired at the enemy, more for the sake of spoiling their aim than with the expectation of doing real mischief. Then we spurred vigorously over the brow of the hill.

As we foresaw, the enemy were too impatient to refrain from firing. Bang! Whizz! Every man discharged his musket at once, and the bullets sped across the chasm like a flock of birds. To any one but a veteran soldier our escape from death must have seemed miraculous, and indeed I never expected to get through alive. However, the bold game succeeded admirably.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Dicky whipped up his horses, and, chancing a nasty spill, brought them thundering along close on our heels, before the mountaineers had time to reload. Stung by their failure, they treated us to frantic yells of mingled rage and hatred, but this was far better than musketry fire at close quarters!

Down the hill we went at a mad rush, trying gradually to slacken the pace of our gallant animals, till once more we shot out on to the level road. By this time Patsy was suffering agony from his wounded arm, but we were out of the clutches of the enemy, and, with-

out further adventure, reached the little town of Castasia. The good folk were still abed, but stopping before the principal hotel, I hammered at the door to such purpose that all the establishment appeared at the windows.

While they were coming to the door Dicky scrambled down from his seat. He was bathed in perspiration, his arms had been pulled nearly from their sockets, but luckily not a shot had touched him.

"That's what I call a rattling good ride, with a bit of excitement about it to make things lively!" he exclaimed.

Entering the hotel, we sent a messenger for the nearest surgeon, and carried the wounded coachman to a bedroom. The proprietor did not seem to appreciate our patronage altogether, but he ordered breakfast to be got ready immediately, and our trembling horses, covered with foam, were led away to the stables.

The surgeon, a grizzled old chap who had served with Garibaldi years before in Rome, set Patsy's arm and dressed the more serious wound of the coachman.

"Is the wound fatal?" asked my guardian, who had kept very quiet.

"Ah, no. He'll be in bed for a month, but with care he'll pull through."

"I shall make myself responsible for your charges. Jim, write the name of our hotel at Naples, and give the doctor."

The surgeon thanked me, took the paper, and, promising to attend to the wounded man faithfully, withdrew.

During breakfast Mr. Carter became more like

himself; came out of his shell, so to speak, and plied us with questions. The account of the campaign filled him with much amazement, and he listened with interest to the story we told. The overthrow of the Bourbon, the recognition of Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy, the withdrawal of Garibaldi at the height of his power to Caprera—each point was to him entirely new. Of his own experiences he said little, nor at any time did he dwell much on the subject, though I gathered that the account given me by the Countess was in the main accurate. From the first Giovanni had swindled him out of large sums of money, ostensibly for the patriot cause; and when the revolution proved successful had carried him off to Castelupo with the object of gaining control of his fortune. But, though saying little of his imprisonment, he was exceedingly keen to hear everything connected with the rescue, and our faces flushed at his pleasant words of praise.

"Why," said he, with the first faint approach to a smile, "it was quite a warlike expedition! But where are the others?"

"We left them on the mountains. Francesco had a bone of his own to pick with Giovanni."

My guardian sighed sadly; he was tired of bloodshed. After breakfast he made arrangements for the comfort of the wounded man, and then, exhausted by the unwonted excitement, lay down to sleep. Dicky, too, not having closed his eyes for thirty-six hours, was glad of a nap, but Patsy and I went into the town hoping to hear something of the missing men. Our efforts, however, were vain, and early in the afternoon we decided on continuing the journey to Naples.

Dicky treated my proposal to hire a fresh driver with disdain, and as the others agreed to trust him with their lives I had no more to say.

Attracted by rumours of the mad Englishmen, the natives clustered in the square to see us start, and cheered vociferously when the versatile correspondent gathered up the reins in approved style. Patsy and my guardian got inside; the hotel proprietor, soothed by an application of golden ointment, closed the door, Jehu cracked the whip, and away we went, kicking up a perfect cloud of dust. Though somewhat hampered by Patsy's horse, I enjoyed the ride much more than the one in the early morning, and, but for anxiety as to Francesco's fate, should have felt quite contented.

Our arrival at Naples was a surprise to the landlord of our hotel, but the worthy fellow greeted my guardian warmly, while the servants hastened to make things comfortable. After dinner Mr. Carter went straight to bed, and indeed it was very evident he needed rest.

"He'll need to be looked after carefully," remarked my chum. "He's very nearly run down."

"You're right, my boy," said Dicky. "And now, what do you fellows intend doing?"

"Sleep the clock round if nobody disturbs us!"

"Lucky beggars! I must be off to Gaeta first thing in the morning."

"Shan't we see you again, then?"

"Not till I get back to England. I'll look you up then. Good-bye! Sorry to have to say it. It's been a real treat to me to have met you."

Patsy roared. "We've taken you a nice little trip to wind up with, at any rate!" he exclaimed.

"It will make good copy. Well, I must go. Telegrams to hunt up and arrange for; the people at home keep us correspondents pretty lively."

Shaking the genial fellow's hand, we watched him go with regret, rendered less keen only by the hope of meeting him again in the old country.

"And now," said Patsy, "I vote we turn in."

CHAPTER XXIX

A PEACEFUL HAVEN

MY laudable ambition to sleep the clock round was, after all, not gratified. I had successfully negotiated a battle or two, a powder explosion, an eruption of Vesuvius, and an earthquake, without more than half turning in bed, when an ear-splitting "Jimmy! Jimmy! You deaf beggar!" brought me round. Of course it was the last descendant of a line of kings, and, as my eyes opened, he muttered scornfully of adders and posts and blocks of wood.

When he had talked himself out I tried to go to sleep again, but the villain grabbed me by the shoulder.

"Get up," said he, "don't you hear? There's a visitor to see you!"

"Odd time for making a call," I muttered sleepily. "Couldn't he call again after breakfast?"

"It's your brigand returned from the mountains!"

That wakened me thoroughly. Jumping out of bed, I slipped a few things on and followed Patsy to our room. The shutters were open, and the morning light fell full upon the Neapolitan. He presented a sorry sight, though showing little of the terrible strain he had undergone. His eyes were still bright, and he was alert as usual; but there was blood on his face and matted hair, his clothes were torn, and he carried his arm in a sling.

"Glad to see you back, my friend; but you're hurt, aren't you?" I exclaimed.

"Not much; a mere scratch that will be well in a week. I was anxious to know if your father had escaped."

"Thanks to you, he is here safe and sound. The coachman, poor fellow, got rather a nasty wound. We left him at Castasia."

"Dead?"

"No. The surgeon says he will be all right in a month. But what of the other brave fellows?"

"Two were shot dead in the house, one on the hill-side, one is missing, and the rest have returned home."

"A heavy bill!" said I thoughtfully. Francesco did not agree with me.

"Your father is free," he said, "and we have punished the man who broke faith with us."

"Then you caught him?"

"Yes. I had our prisoners marched down, and gave them two minutes to point out their leader's hiding-place. He had escaped by means of a trap-door, but only to be caught like a rat."

"And treated like one!" said Patsy.

"The man had a fair trial, signor; fairer than many poor wretches have had," returned the Neapolitan with dignity. "He broke his oath, and paid the penalty; nothing could be simpler. Keep your sympathy for those whom he has wronged."

"There's some sense in that," said my chum.

Francesco looked through the window. "The day is here," said he; "I must go. The carriage is in the stables?"

"And the horses. One we left behind, lame; but

Signor Carter will see that your friends do not suffer through their generosity."

"We have no claim on him. We have been working for the Society."

"You shall tell that to the signor himself; at least he will wish to thank you. He is not quite well, and I would rather not disturb him just now. But this evening——"

"I will be here," and, with a courteous farewell, Francesco withdrew.

"That chap's had a better bringing up than his present appearance suggests," remarked Patsy. "I'll warrant there's a fair slice of romance in his life!"

"He certainly acts and speaks like a gentleman on occasion."

"Oh, he's different altogether from the rest of the crowd. Well, I suppose it's no good going to bed again?"

"No," said I regretfully, "we may as well dress."

My guardian still slept, and, knowing the value of a good sound rest, we would not have him wakened. At dinner we told him of Francesco's visit, and he at once became impatient to see him.

"Thank goodness," he exclaimed, "I still have plenty of money! I shall be able to reward all those brave men for their kindness."

He had, however, reckoned without Francesco, who would take nothing for himself.

"I have not forgotten my child, and all that you did for her," he said simply, nor could any amount of persuasion induce him to change his mind.

With regard to the others the case was different. The missing man had returned safely; but three were

dead, and my guardian was anxious to compensate their relatives in the most liberal manner, besides paying the expenses of the expedition.

To this Francesco agreed; but, with a bitter smile, he said, "You rate human life too highly. Here in Naples you might buy a hundred lives for the price you pay for three!"

When the arrangements were concluded, he wished us good-bye, saying it was not likely we should meet again.

"I am afraid not," said my guardian. "I, too, have suffered in your beautiful but unhappy Naples, and am going away to the grayer skies of my own land. But I shall never forget you, Francesco, or that to you I owe my life. Take this paper, it is the address of my English home. Should you ever be in need of help, write to me there and I will endeavour to repay your kindness."

The Neapolitan put the paper away carefully. "Farewell, signor," he exclaimed, and the fierce face looked almost beautiful with a new light. "You are a man with a heart! Were there more like you, there would be fewer of us." A simple bit of philosophy which the world finds it hard to learn.

Having bade Patsy and me good-bye, and expressed a wish for our happiness, he went away, never more to be seen by any of us.

"A great nature," said my guardian thoughtfully "but sadly warped by circumstances. Had fate been kinder, Francesco Poli might have developed into a great man."

"I like him awfully," my chum remarked, "though I don't altogether like calling on him at home."

Mr. Carter thought there was little danger even in the slums if the people knew you had no evil intentions, but on that subject Patsy and I held our own opinions.

Next morning we formed a council to decide on our future proceedings. Patsy was anxious to return home, and so it was agreed we should all go together. First, however, there were various business matters to be cleared up, and my guardian found it necessary to pay several visits to his bankers. How deeply Giovanni had bled him I never knew, as he always avoided the subject, and of course I asked no questions.

During our last day's stay in Naples we received an unexpected visit from Teddy Mackworth and Tarleton, who wanted to know all about the raid on the Cafones. The sight of Patsy's wound sobered them a bit, but by the time we finished telling the story, their usual spirits returned in full force and we suffered accordingly. Dicky's performance as amateur Jehu tickled them immensely, and that energetic war correspondent got a considerable roasting when next they met him.

My guardian enjoyed their visit; their rattle kept him amused, while he at once became a favourite with them.

"A regular jolly chap," exclaimed Teddy confidentially, "with no side about him! We'll run down to see you when we get back to England," a magnanimous offer for which I thanked him heartily.

Mr. Carter ordered a sumptuous dinner in honour of his guests, after which we accompanied the budding admirals to their boat and saw them off.

That night my guardian told us he was obliged to go to Genoa, and next morning we took leave of the

beautiful city which had played such an important part in our lives during the last few months. As there was no immediate hurry, we elected to go by sea and pay a visit to Garibaldi at Caprera.

The veteran received us with great pleasure, and was so fully occupied with my guardian that he could not find time to set us to work. Patsy, I fancy, rather regretted this, because of course his wounded arm would have exempted him in any case. However, we passed three very pleasant days wandering over the island with Menotti and his sister, or telling yarns of the campaign.

On the day of our departure young Garibaldi took us to La Maddalena, where we caught the very steamer on board which the Countess had fooled me with her forged letter and plausible story. This time, however, there was no late passenger running up the pier at the last minute, and I could not avoid thinking how many wonderful changes had occurred since that memorable day.

"Expecting the Countess to turn up?" asked my chum banteringly, as I stood gazing at fast-receding Caprera. "Wonderful woman, wasn't she? I expect she's making things lively for Victor Emmanuel. Just imagine those Cafones after she'd stirred them up for a week! Why, she'd be able to lead them like sheep."

"Well, thank goodness we're out of it! I shall be glad when the business at Genoa is settled."

"So shall I. Italy's a fine place, but give me the old country after all!"

Mr. Carter had gone below. He had improved both in health and spirits, but was still far from

strong, and the excitement of meeting Garibaldi had proved rather too much for him. Business at Genoa detained us nearly a week, and then one morning we set out on our homeward journey with glad hearts.

Travelling by easy stages to Paris, we spent a few days in the gay city with Patsy's numerous friends, and then, running down to Calais, crossed the "silver streak."

It was a dark, gloomy afternoon when we landed, and London was blotted out by a typical fog, but no physical discomfort could damp our joy at being home again.

"A fig for the blue skies of Italy!" said my chum, as our cab crawled through the thick fog. "Don't you feel better already, Mr. Carter?"

My guardian laughed genially. "I am glad to be home again," he replied, "though really I cannot say this darkness adds to my pleasure."

In spite of the fog we reached our hotel in the highest good humour, and spent a very pleasant evening together.

Here my story properly ends. "One of the Red Shirts" no longer, I had become an ordinary British citizen, with the highest respect for the laws and a proper reverence for the blue-coated guardians of the peace. The wild adventures, the excitement of plot and counter-plot, the clash of arms, the fierce strife of battle, the furious charge, the stern defence, were things of the past, henceforth and for ever to pass out of my life.

After a visit to my home, where my younger brothers regarded me as a half-mythical hero, and my dear mother wept anew to think of the dangers I had been in, I rejoined my guardian at his country house in

Berkshire. He was never again quite the man he once had been. The hardships of his prison life, and perhaps even more the remembrance of Giovanni's treachery, weighed upon him, and, though far from shunning society, he lost that keen interest in public affairs which had marked his earlier years. As a country gentleman with a large income he did a great deal of good in a quiet, unostentatious way, endearing himself to his own tenants and to the poor for miles around. Because he wished it I stayed with him, and if at times I felt bored by the monotony, I recalled all his great kindness, and was content.

"I have no kith or kin of my own, Jim," he said one day, "and at my death everything will pass to you. Before that time comes I want you to learn the duties attendant upon wealth. I should not like to think the money would be used unwisely."

So, to the scene of storm and stress of which I have written there has succeeded a period of peace, hardly ever broken save by the veriest trifles. Occasionally some one who knew me in the old days will run down, and then we adjourn to my special room, where hangs the tattered "B. L.," whose originator lies, alas! on the hillside at Reggio.

Of the English friends associated with my career in Italy the reader may like me to say a few words. First and foremost stands Patsy O'Connor, the dashing, joking, loyal-hearted young Irishman, than whom no one can ever need a better friend. In the years that have passed his name has come before the public many times, and always with honour. He is far from London fog now, but I hope to see him soon.

Meanwhile his picture hangs in the place of honour

beneath the torn "B. L." The face looks older, of course, and the youth has become a handsome man in the prime of life, but there is the same frank smile, the same dancing light in the blue eyes, that I learned to love in the past days. No red shirt or sugar-loaf hat now, no bare feet or tattered pants, but the smart yet trim uniform of the British army. For the war fever had caught my rollicking chum badly, and his service during the Sicilian campaign had unfitted him for a peaceful life.

Thus it came about that Ensign O'Connor was gazetted to the 51st regiment, then serving in India, whither the young officer immediately proceeded. I cannot pretend to tell the story of his doings on the North-West Frontier; it is written in official despatches. In due time he blossomed into lieutenant, and then into captain. Now my dear old chum is Major Patrick O'Connor, whose breast is covered with medals, and whose name is well known to the men guarding our Indian Dominions as that of a gallant and distinguished soldier. Amongst my most treasured possessions are his breezy campaign letters, but I read them only on rare occasions; they stir the blood too much, and that is not good for a peaceful country squire.

The valiant and resourceful Dicky has, in his way, prospered exceedingly. Since that tough fight on the Volturno many battles have occurred on European soil, and he has missed but few of them.

At Sadowa, where the Austrians were crushed by the victorious Prussians, at epoch-making Sedan, which lost Napoleon his throne and changed a Prussian King into a German Emperor, inside famine-stricken, beleaguered Paris, on the banks of the broad Danube

and the rocky spurs of the Balkans, there Dicky has written the brilliant letters which, printed in the columns of his paper, have electrified the country. Throughout Europe he is known as the famous war correspondent, but to me he will ever be Dicky-bird, who thought Garibaldi might have obliged him with the spectacle of a battle in Southern Italy.

Only a week or two back, Captain Tarleton, R.N., paid me a visit while on his way to join the ship to which he had just been appointed. Responsibility had somewhat sobered him, and the shadow of a great grief still rested on his face.

"Poor old Teddy," he said on leaving, "I shall never forget him!"

I have said that my peaceful haven was rarely disturbed, but there had been one terrible exception. In the bloom of his early manhood Teddy Mackworth, the brightest, cheeriest, most frolicsome of youngsters, had gone unflinchingly to death. Not in a great battle had he met it, but in a petty skirmish on that dark African coast which has demanded the blood of so many of our bravest and best.

The story is brief. A boat's crew suddenly attacked by a swarm of howling natives, a stubborn fight, inevitable retreat, the dropping of a wounded man right in the track of the victorious foe. Then it was that Teddy, the jovial, light-hearted youngster, showed the grit of the men who have made the British Empire. Without hesitation he ran back, seized the stricken man, and, with the help of a blue-jacket, carried him into safety. Two terrible wounds he received, but struggled on, nothing daunted, till placed in the boat by his men.

He died that same evening, clasping Tarleton's hand, and the men grieved as if each had lost his dearest friend.

So Teddy sleeps in his quiet grave, but the influence of his unselfish act still lives, and men speak of him with pride as one who, true to the traditions of his race and service, has laid down his life ungrudgingly at Duty's call.

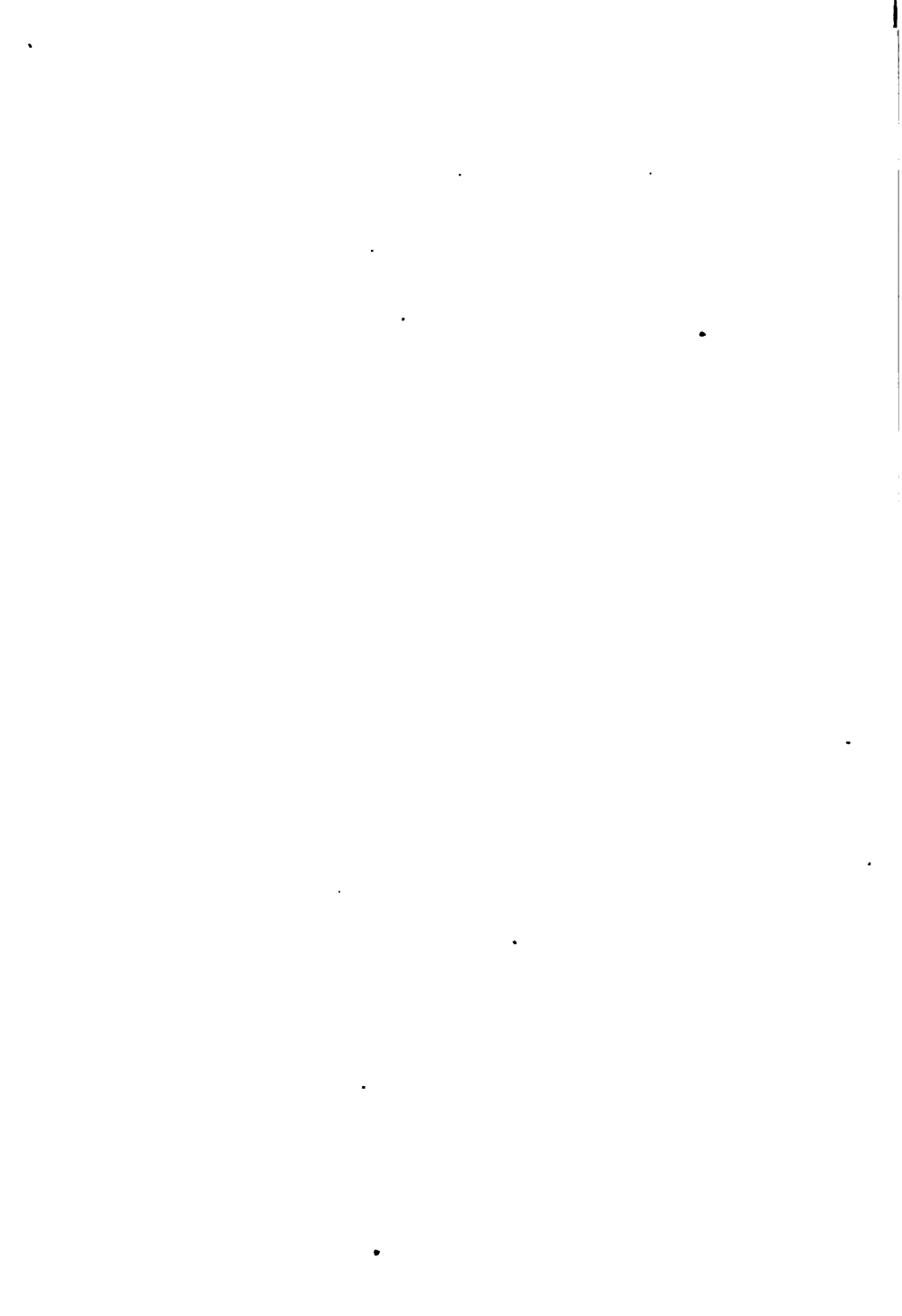
Of Francesco we heard no further tidings, and the Countess, too, dropped completely out of my life.

Garibaldi we saw once again, but it was only a passing glimpse, and we were simple units in a crowd of which I have never seen the like.

London streets were packed with the representatives of the nation which, next to his own, the Italian patriot best loved. From the highest to the lowest in the land all had united to show him honour, and, as his carriage slowly paced along, such a roar of welcome, such a lusty British cheer burst from the vast multitude, that even the hero of two worlds was startled.

And in that hour of his triumph my pulse throbbed and my heart beat more quickly at the remembrance that I, too, had been

"ONE OF THE RED SHIRTS!"

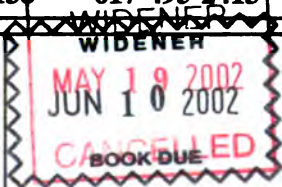


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